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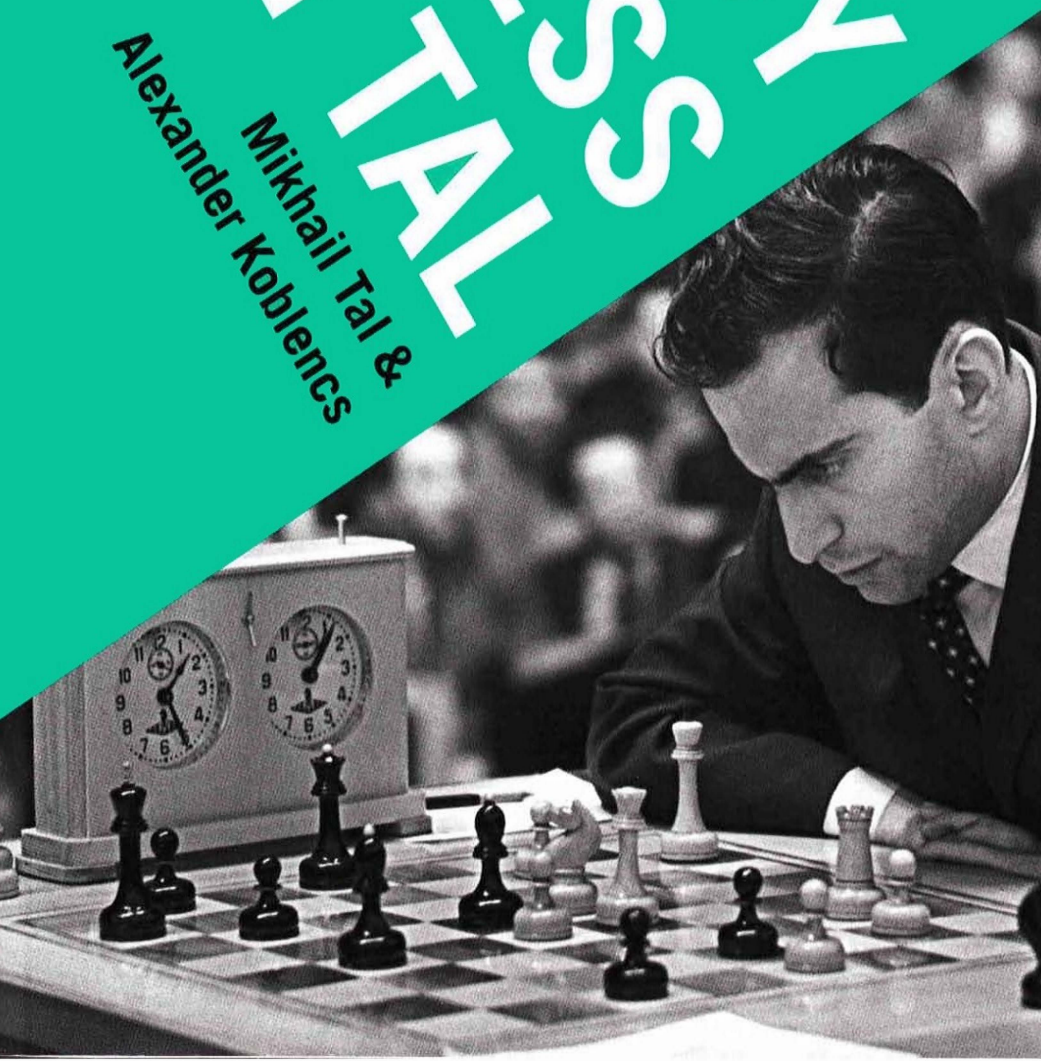
STUDY CHESS WITH TAL

Mikhail Tal &
Alexander Koblencs



Study Chess with Tal

Alexander Koblencs and Mikhail Tal

Translated by Mike Price

BATSFORD

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To the Reader

The raw material for this book was gleaned from my training diaries, which contain the output from every training session with the ex-world champion Mikhail Tal. They are mainly made up of his game analyses, carried out immediately after the games whilst the chess and psychological impressions were still fresh and clear. We also used annotations done either by Tal or myself, which appeared in the Soviet press.

I did not find it easy to make a selection from over two thousand of Tal's games. However, I think I have succeeded in illustrating the most important strategical and tactical problems that will be of benefit to practical players. If the majority of the book is given to methods of attack on the king, it is not only because Tal excels at this but also for the simple reason that attacking the king is the most effective way to realise a positional advantage quickly. Indeed, it should never be forgotten that the ultimate aim of every chess game is to mate the enemy king, but as combinations do not just appear out of thin air I have also given special attention to the positional preparation which a successful combination requires.

You have the opportunity here, along with Tal, to explore the intellectual apparatus of a grandmaster and to become acquainted with his style of play. Tal is placed most prominently in the ranks of modern Soviet players and in the opinion of the ex-world champion Dr Euwe he has already assured himself of an honourable position in the list of world champions.

Aided by these full-blooded games of Tal, I have tried to produce a book for the practising player in which I systematically outline the analytical/theoretical basis of Tal's ability to breathe life into the wooden pieces.

This book, then, is intended to teach – thus the most important question for the reader is how best to use it. Before I trouble you with the didactic hints I should like to include a thought from Goethe, which dates from 25 January 1830, 'People just do not realise how much time and trouble it takes to read and to make use of what is read; I have needed eighty years for it'.

Perhaps you may understand the poet's insight rather more clearly if you consider this book as one to be worked through slowly, in your own time – it is not bed-time reading. In this way, the book can help you to develop your chess thinking (i.e. your analytical skills). In order to do this, I have inserted questions in the text which give you the opportunity to discover, by your own analysis, more than two hundred of Tal's moves. One word of practical advice – play through the games slowly and use a book-mark to cover up the line after you see six asterisks like this

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and then make an honest attempt to find out the next move. It is also useful to make up a training partnership with a friend, then sometimes one player can follow the game from the book and the analysis can be done independently.

Finally, it only remains for me to wish you pleasure and success as you work through this book.

Alexander Koblencs

[*Editor's note*: In order to involve the reader even further, I have replaced a good many of the asterisks by questions, ranging from elementary to advanced, and transferred the answers to the end of the book.]

In Lieu of a Foreword

'Which chess book has most impressed you and perhaps played a role in forming your style of play?' This was one of the questions put to the grandmasters by the chess magazine *Shakhmaty* during a tournament in 1967. My reply was: 'The book *Šaha Skola* (Chess School) by Alexander Koblencs had a great influence upon me – and this statement is not simply meant as a mark of respect for my trainer of long standing'.

In his book, which is appearing in Russian, Latvian, German, Italian, French, Spanish and Serbo-Croat, he has succeeded in explaining clearly the most important strategic and tactical principles. In this, his new work, my trainer intends to go further by showing the learner how to apply this knowledge to practical games. In this way, the learner will be helped to solve over-the-board problems independently and efficiently. In order to establish some uniformity as to the mental processes used in grandmaster play, the author has based his work on my chess. This is understandable, for who knows me better than my own second?

I have declared myself ready to contribute my best to this undertaking, openly and without any frills, and perhaps this may be pioneer work in the sphere of chess methodology.

Mikhail Tal

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The Uncastled King – a Pawn Cocktail

I have no need to discover America – good old Columbus has already done so. Just as America is well known, so nowadays is the basic principle of opening strategy that one should develop one's pieces as quickly as possible and make it maximally difficult for one's opponent to do the same. As well known as America, and yet even grandmasters often ignore this fundamental chess truth or they seem to forget it in the heat of battle. How can this phenomenon be explained?

Principles of development seem to be ignored mostly when an opponent offers a pawn sacrifice. Then one feverishly begins to weigh up the pros and cons; should it be snapped up or should it be rejected as too dangerous a gift? On the one hand, the defender hears the warning whisper that if it is accepted he will be behind in development. On the other, a common human failing comes into play, the desire to have more, and this is when principles are rather obstinately cast aside.

One thinks, 'Oh well, I'll snap it up and let my opponent bear the onus of justifying the sacrifice'. When there are no visible, concrete threats and the future seems to be nebulous, the offer is heartily accepted. After all, a pawn is a pawn! With this theme in mind, we shall begin our quest.

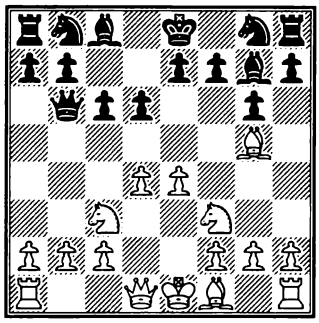
Game No. 1

Tal – Tringov

Interzonal tournament, Amsterdam 1964

King's Fianchetto Defence

1 e4 g6 2 d4 ♗g7 3 ♘c3 d6 4 ♘f3 c6 5 ♗g5 ♕b6

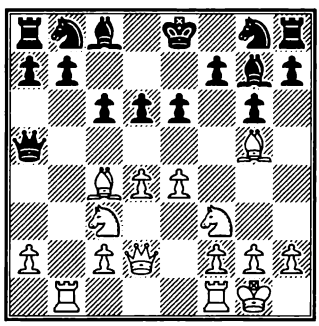


TRINGOV

Position after 5 ... ♕b6

TAL

Here Black could have transposed into a variation of the Pirc-Ufimtsev defence by 5 ... ♘f6. With his text move he wants to capitalise immediately upon the absence of White's queen's bishop and to attack the unprotected b-pawn. **6 ♕d2 ♕xb2 7 ♖b1 ♕a3 8 ♗c4 ♕a5** No doubt intending to prepare ... e5 and to protect d8 after the possible opening of the d-file. **9 0-0** White takes no notice and continues his normal development. **9 ... e6?** This proves to be a loss of time.



TRINGOV

Position after 9 ... e6

TAL

10 ♖fe1! a6 11 ♗f4 e5 This is already the decisive mistake. Now the position will be opened up, which is usually to the advantage of the better developed side. Black should have kept the position closed with 11 ... ♕d8, but it is never easy to turn tail. **12 dxe5 dxe5**

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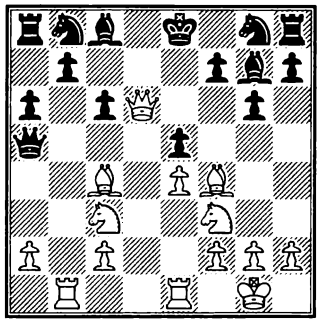
13 ♕d6!



TRINGOV

Position after 13 ♕d6

TAL

A tremendous move! The queen is particularly devastating on this square and White now threatens the decisive ♖ed1.

13 ... ♕xc3

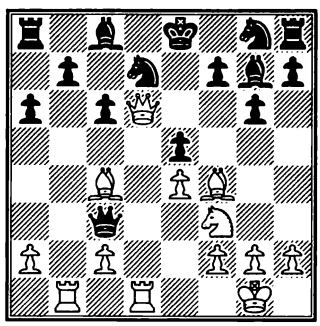
Desperation. Yet to try to dislodge White's powerful queen with 13 ... ♕d8 does not work because of 14 ♗xf7+.

Question 1 **What would happen after 13 ... exf4 ?**

14 ♖ed1

Whilst Black's queenside pieces are still enjoying their beauty sleep, the white forces are involved in vigorous activity. A chastening example of what happens when development is neglected.

14 ... ♘d7



TRINGOV

Position after 14 ... ♘d7

TAL

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15 ♗xf7+

This sacrifice makes it possible for the knight to come into the attack with a gain of tempo. The interplay which follows, between queen and knight, is particularly dangerous as these two pieces embody the operational possibilities of all the other pieces. **15 ... ♔xf7 16 ♘g5+ ♔e8 17 ♕e6+ Resigns**. After 17 ... ♘e7 18 ♕f7+ ♔d8 19 ♘e6, and after 17 ... ♔d8 18 ♘f7+ ♔c7 19 ♕d6 Black suffers a similar fate.

War is about Communication

These words of Napoleon stress the need for good lines of communication in successful military operations. This applies equally well to chess, and the words 'communication lines' can help us to understand the significance of the 'centre' (the squares e4, e5, d4, d5).

Why should we strive, in the main, to deploy our forces around the centre? The two main reasons are that firstly, a piece which is posted in the centre contests more squares than one which is placed at the side of the board and, secondly, pieces can be moved more quickly for attack or defence from central positions (communication!). Communications which create possibilities for attacking weak points or even penetrating the enemy position are particularly valuable in a strategic sense.

The great Max Euwe once emphasised, with good reason, that the most difficult strategic exercise in the opening and especially in the middlegame is to activate the rooks. Indeed, the problem which emerges time after time in actual play is how to get open lines for these dormant yet powerful pieces.

In the following game the central rooks pressurise Black's pawn structure in a most effective manner.

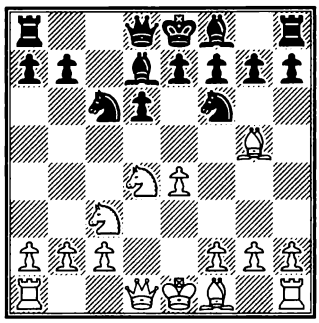
Game No. 2

Tal – Klaman

USSR Championship, Moscow 1957

Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 d6 6 ♗g5 ♗d7

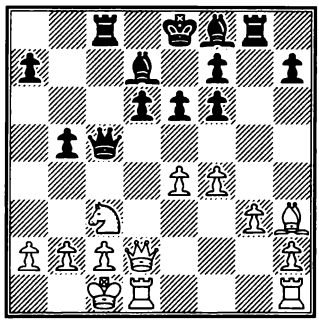


KLAMAN

Position after 6 ... ♗d7

TAL

From this pawn structure in the Sicilian game, the half-open c-file forms the base from which Black's major pieces will operate. Black's last move underlines this basic idea and he begins with the immediate development of the queenside. Naturally this procedure has its drawbacks – the development of the kingside is neglected, the king remains tied down to its original square and the king's rook is consequently committed to a passive role. **7 ♕d2** This move is part of a little stratagem. In the tournament bulletin, Tal and I made the following comment on this idea: '... leads to a loss of time, but White deliberately wanted to lure his opponent into exploiting this loss, in order to obtain attacking chances in the centre and on the kingside after the exchange on d4'. Of course, simply either 7 ♗xf6 or ♗e2 were also playable. **7 ... ♘xd4 8 ♕xd4 ♕a5 9 ♗xf6 gxf6 10 0-0-0 ♖c8 11 f4 ♖g8 12 g3 e6 13 ♗h3** A move like 13 ♕xf6 is quickly rejected by the experienced campaigner because, after 13 ... ♗g7, Black gets a dangerous hold on the long diagonal. **13 ... ♕c5** The white queen on d4 is too strongly placed, so she has to be driven away. Moreover, White threatens the attacking manoeuvre 14 ♖he1 followed by 15 ♘d5. **14 ♕d2 b5**

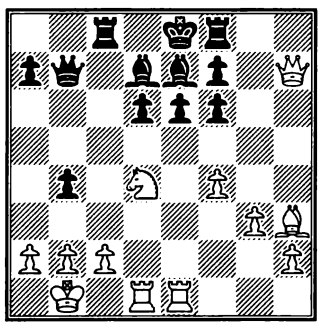


KLAMAN

Position after 14 ... b5

TAL

By moving White's knight from c3, Black wishes to increase the pressure on the c-file. Also the move contains a tactical threat, which does not in fact work. **15 ♖he1 b4 16 ♘e2 ♕c4 17 ♔b1 ♕xe4** A typical psychological error. When one has systematically worked out an idea, it is difficult to check through again and alter the plan before putting it into operation – one almost becomes bewitched by the original idea. Black ought to have realised that after the capture of the pawn on e4, the e-file is opened for the rook. **18 ♘d4 ♕b7 19 ♕d3!** Simple and strong. The queen occupies a communication line (d3-h7) which makes it possible to penetrate into the opposing camp. **19 ... ♗e7 20 ♕xh7 ♖f8**



KLAMAN

Position after 20 ... ♖f8

TAL

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21 ♗g4!

In this type of position one must try to prevent the enemy king's escape from the danger zone. After the text move White can answer 21 ... ♔d8 with 22 ♗h5 and, if 22 ... ♗e8, Tal had prepared a beautiful mating combination.

Question 2 **Can you find it?**

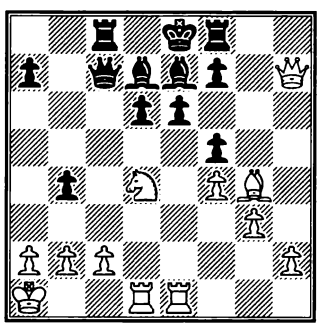
This gives us the opportunity to outline the theoretically essential components of a combination. They are motive, aim and means, and may be described as follows:

(1) Motive – the positional prerequisites which make a combination possible; in this case it is clearly the unsafe position of the king.

(2) Aim – the final position after the combination has been carried out; again this is clear – the position after 27 ♘e6 mate.

(3) Means – the moves by which the end position is reached. In such combinations, the attacker must constantly pressurise his opponent with threats and compel him to make forced moves.

Now back to the game! **21 ... ♕c7 22 ♔a1!** Enticing his opponent into a nasty hidden trap. **22 ... f5** Stronger was 22 ... a5, but Black obviously wanted to provoke the following sacrifice.



KLAMAN

Position after 22 ... f5

TAL

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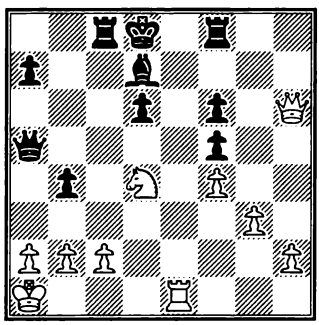
23 ♗xf5!

A decoy sacrifice! The removal of the pawn on e6 opens the file for the white rook and gives it a direct route into the enemy camp. **23 ... exf5**

* * * * * *

24 ♖xe7+!

Now we see an elimination sacrifice – so called because it eliminates important defenders around the king and thus weakens his position. **24 ... ♔xe7 25 ♖e1+ ♔d8** If the white king had been on b1, Black could simply have played 25 ... ♗e6 as 26 ♘xe6 would lose to 26 ... ♕xc2+. **26 ♕h4+ f6 27 ♕h6 ♕a5** Black had pinned his hopes on this move when he played 22 ... f5. What is to happen now?



KLAMAN

Position after 27... ♕a5

TAL

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28 ♘b3!

This 'zwischenzug' completely upsets Black's calculations. Black had only reckoned with the incorrect 28 ♕xf8+. After 28 ... ♔c7, 29 ♕xf6 loses to 29 ... b3 and also after 29 ♕e7 ♖e8 30 ♘e6+ ♔c8 31 ♕xd6 the thrust with 31 ... b3 still decides the issue; whilst after 29 ♘b3 Black can intervene with check, 29 ... ♕xa2+, win a pawn, and go into the endgame. After the text move White finally has two more pawns and wins easily. These were the remaining moves: **28 ... ♕d5 29 ♕xf8+ ♔c7 30 ♕xf6 ♖e8 31 ♖c1 ♗a4 32 ♕d4 ♕b7 33 ♖d1 ♖e6 34 ♕c4+ Resigns.**

A Surprising Knight Move

In the following game White succeeds in engineering a lead in development by a typical, yet highly instructive method. Black gobbled up a pawn and thought that he could keep the position closed. White, however, found a surprising knight move (12 ♘f5) and Black's forced capture of the piece led to the e-file being opened. From this Tal got a dangerous initiative and, by continuous threats, never gave his opponent any breathing space whatsoever. Finally White penetrated Black's position on the diagonal a3-f8 and decided the issue conclusively. A vital role was played by the weakness of the black squares after the capture of the pawn. Let us look at these dramatic events as they unfolded in the game itself.

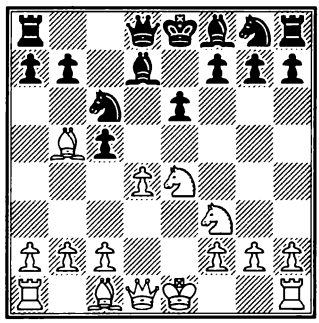
Game No. 3

Tal – Uhlmann

Alekhine Memorial, Moscow 1971

French Defence

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘d2 c5 4 ♘gf3 ♘c6 5 ♗b5 Normal here is 5 exd5. Tal strikes home by playing the text move, recommended by Alekhine. Usually Uhlmann, who is an acknowledged expert of the French Defence, plays the opening very quickly. However after this move he sank into deep thought for twenty minutes. Often a little surprise like this serves to confuse and to disconcert. Perhaps this unpleasant surprise in the opening is the psychological explanation for Uhlmann's later unfortunate play. **5 ... dxe4 6 ♘xe4 ♗d7**

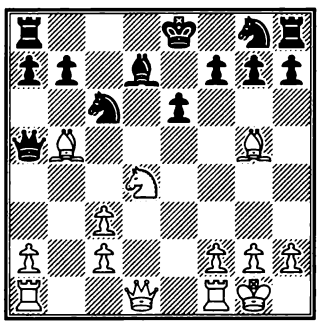


UHLMANN

Position after 6 ... ♗d7

TAL

7 ♗g5! After this move Tal made the following pertinent remark, 'Speed of development is the first priority and the open position renders each extra tempo especially valuable'. **7 ... ♕a5+ 8 ♘c3 cxd4 9 ♘xd4 ♗b4** More logical may have been 9 ... ♗e7, after which Tal did not intend to play the theoretically equalising line 10 ♗e3 ♕c7 but to go in for the sharper 10 ♕d2 ♘f6 11 0-0-0. Black now goes pawn-grabbing but he does not sufficiently consider that after ... ♗xc3 his own black squares become weak and defenceless. **10 0-0 ♗xc3 11 bxc3**



UHLMANN

Position after 11 bxc3

TAL

11 ... ♕xc3

Question 3 **However, what could Tal have played after 11 ... a6 ?**

The usual psychological chain-reaction – in for a penny, in for a pound.

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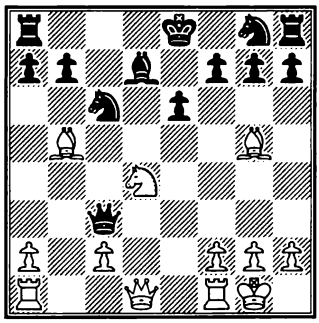


UHLMANN

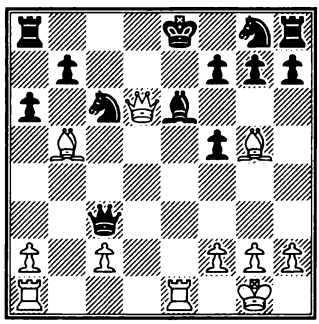
Position after 11 ... ♕xc3

TAL

12 ♘f5!

Obviously Uhlmann had overlooked this strong move, and we now see the idea that was mentioned in the introductory remarks. The knight taunts Black menacingly – it must be taken and, when it is, the game is opened up and new gaps and weaknesses appear. Above all, the e-file is open.

12 ... exf5 13 ♖e1+ ♗e6 14 ♕d6 a6



UHLMANN

Position after 14 ... a6

TAL

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15 ♗d2!

I once happened to be present at a short chess talk given by Tal, at which he told a beginner, 'it is most important to clear a path into the enemy camp and then penetrate with your forces'. In this game, Tal does not need to clear a path – Uhlmann has already done it for him by weakening his own black squares, and the surprising bishop move will now capitalise upon this – in particular, White has his eye on f8. **15 ... ♕xc2 16 ♗b4**

Again, nothing new. It is well known that a queen alone can achieve nothing – she needs support. In the game Tal – Tringov, we saw the combination of queen and knight; now we see the duet of queen and bishop. **16 ... axb5 17 ♕f8+ ♔d7 18 ♖ed1+ ♔c7 19 ♕xa8 Resigns**.

The Rook in Ambush

The following game is similar to the previous one. Again, a knight is sacrificed to open the e-file upon the centralised king. In the previous game the knight sacrifice on f5 led to the complete opening of the centre, as there was no pawn on the e-file, and the combined invasion of the rooks brought about a swift end. In the following game the possible opening of the e-file is less obvious, as there is a black pawn on his e6 and another white pawn on e4, and the potential of the rook on e1 seems to be restricted. Yet White's d5 looks inviting and once more we see that the rook comes into its own after the sacrifice is accepted.

Game No. 4

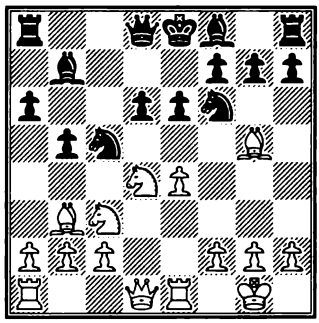
Tal – Mukhin

USSR Championship, Baku 1972

Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗c4 e6 7 ♗b3 b5 8 0-0 ♗b7 The Sicilian game with a vengeance. Black immediately builds up an attacking position on the queenside and leaves the king in the centre. We have already met this strategy in Game No. 2. **9 ♖e1 ♘bd7 10 ♗g5 ♘c5** When Mukhin played this move, he was undoubtedly

thinking of a Fischer – Rubinetti game. After the alternative 10 ... ♗e7 he feared the blow 11 ♗xe6 (see Tal – Polugayevsky).



MUKHIN

Position after 10 ... ♘c5

TAL

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11 ♗d5!

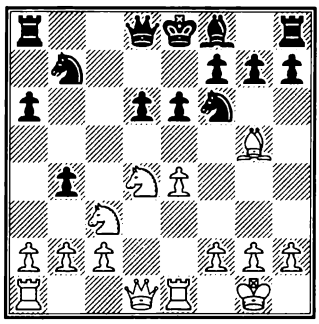
In the Fischer – Rubinetti game, mentioned above, the bishop was sacrificed after 10 ... h6 11 ♗h4 ♘c5 12 ♗d5 exd5 13 exd5+ ♔d7 14 b4 ♘a4 15 ♘xa4 bxa4 16 c4 ♔c8 17 ♕xa4 ♕d7 18 ♕b3 g5 19 ♗g3 ♘h5 20 c5 dxc5 21 bxc5 ♕xd5 22 ♖e8+ ♔d7 23 ♕a4+ ♗c6 24 ♘xc6, Black resigned. Perhaps Black ought to have declined the offer of the bishop by playing 12 ... ♗e7.

Question 4 **How would White react to that?**

11 ... b4

Mukhin goes his own way but he cannot save the game either. In the analysis after the game, both players agreed that Black is now hopelessly lost. In their opinion, instead of 10 ... ♘c5?, the continuation 10 ... h6 11 ♗h4 g5 12 ♗g3 ♘e5 would have led to a double-edged game.

12 ♗xb7 ♘xb7



MUKHIN

Position after 12 ... ♘xb7

TAL

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13 ♘d5!

You had, I trust, foreseen this move? **13 ... exd5** Clearly, it is psychologically unbearable to allow a knight to taunt one openly, in such a manner, for very long. Moreover, a knight placed on the fifth rank is a source of dynamic power because it threatens from just outside the enemy camp, and thus restricts the mobility of his forces.

Question 5 **More specifically, what happens after, say, 13 ... ♘c5??**

We should now like to take these positions and use them as subjects for some theoretical considerations. Have you ever really thought about how the basic elements of every chess game interact (power, space and time).

1. *Power*

The pieces and pawns symbolise power. So much is clear. When one loses pieces without any compensation, one's fighting potential is lessened and the opponent can ultimately force mate with his greater strength.

Many strategic principles can be derived from the basic concept of power, in which the main aim is to force the win of material. At the beginning of the game it is often unavoidable to exchange pieces. In order not to become too short of pieces, the chess player has to consider the

worth of the exchanges in terms of his strategy and tactics. He must know, for example, that a bishop or a knight is worth about three pawns, that two rooks or three minor pieces are usually slightly stronger than the queen and that one needs to get a minor piece and a pawn for a rook.

Of course, the player soon comes to realise that this scale of values can vary in practice, especially when specific threats are present. For example, in the previous games, if Tal had dangerous mating threats he would naturally not count the pieces in absolute terms. However, Tal also belongs to the school of grandmasters who gamble, who sacrifice without concrete evidence of imminent compensation, but who are content with the gain of a lasting initiative. This will be shown in Game No. 23, 'On the Edge of the Precipice'.

2. *Space*

This is our chessboard which represents the battlefield where the armies clash. You will have already grasped the importance of central control. The last diagram exemplifies this well enough.

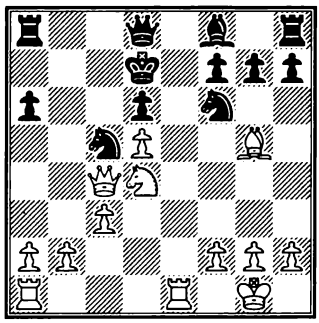
The more space your own pieces and pawns control, the more easily and dangerous are you able to attack your opponent's position, because his pieces are restricted to a few ranks and thus suffer from a lack of mobility. This was mentioned previously in the annotation to move 13 ... exd5.

3. *Time*

Whilst power is symbolised by the pieces and pawns, and space is clearly visible in the black and white squares of the chessboard, we have to imagine the abstract concept of time because it comes into being as each move is played.

By playing through the Tal games, you can see that from the outset there began an exciting race for time. You will have noticed how Tal attempted to develop his own pieces as quickly as possible and to outstrip his opponent in this respect. If one wastes too many moves with one piece, this is called 'losing tempi'. In Game No. 1, Tal tempted his opponent Tringov to win a pawn, which involved many queen moves and gave White a lead in development. A short glance at the diagrammed position will also illustrate White's lead in piece mobility. The game continued: **14 exd5+** The file is open and now the rook has its say. At this point, Tal carefully considered the continuation 14 e5 dxe5 15 ♖xe5+ ♔d7 16 c4. He decided

upon the text move because he had seen an amusing mating variation later on. **14 ... ♔d7** The first consequence is that the king is drawn into an uncomfortable position. **15 c3!** An unpretentious but highly powerful move – now a route is open for the queen to enter the play. **15 ... b3** At least he keeps the c-file closed. **16 ♕xb3 ♘c5 17 ♕c4**



MUKHIN

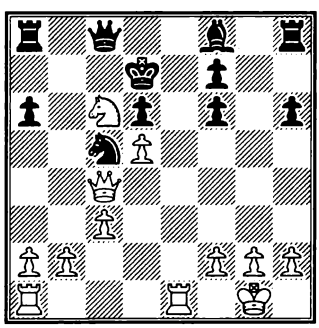
Position after 17 ♕c4

TAL

17 ... ♕c8 Tal had visualised this position.

Question 6 **What had he in mind after 17 ... ♖c8 ?**

Instead of either 17 ... ♕c8 or 17 ... ♖c8, 17 … ♕b6 might have been relatively stronger, but White could then just have simplified into a won endgame with 18 ♗xf6 gxf6 19 b4 ♘b7 (19 ... ♘a4 20 ♕b3) 20 ♕c6+ ♕xc6 21 dxc6+ ♔c7 22 cxb7. **18 ♘c6 h6 19 ♗xf6 gxf6**



MUKHIN

Position after 19 ... gxf6

TAL

* * * * * *

20 ♖e3!

Threatening 21 ♖ae1 and penetrating onto the seventh rank. **20 ... ♔c7 21 b4 ♖g8** and **Black resigned** without waiting for Tal's next move.

I trust that you have played through the previous games carefully and picked out Tal's best moves. Let us now try to trace the path which Tal's thoughts must have taken and to discover the principles which govern his moves – for the power of these moves does not just appear of its own accord, it is derived from certain precepts. This creative path was paved initially by the conception of the basic idea, followed by the appropriate strategic plan and tactical execution.

Every strong player has come across the situation where his opponent is behind in development and has not got his king safely castled. Our chess sense then gives us a certain 'feeling' about the position; firstly, we should hinder or prevent the king's escape from the centre and then immediately exploit the king's precarious position – for a lead in development, unlike the creation of pawn weaknesses, is not a lasting positional advantage. This is the outline of the basic idea and from this highly important cornerstone springs the later strategic plan.

Tal had offset his opponent's basic idea (that of a quick queenside break) by centralising his own pieces in preparation for sacrifices if necessary. Next, the strategic plan was to attack the uncastled king – yet the success of the strategy depended upon tactical aid.

You will have already realised the importance which has been attached to good lines of communication. These are the channels which permit our pieces to attack with maximum force and thus to penetrate into an opponent's territory. Tal maintained the initiative by a series of continual threats and, as we have already stressed, he never gave his opponent any breathing space. Let us remind ourselves once more of this style, from an earlier example (see Tal – Tringov).

By playing 15 ♗xf7+, Tal struck the first decisive blow. Turn back once again, if you will, to this game (No. 1) and consider the winning method in theoretical terms.

(1) The final position was reached by getting the knight into the attack with a gain of tempo.

(2) Queen and knight were then able to combine harmoniously.

(3) After the knight's appearance, White had a preponderance of forces in the critical battle area.

(4) The direct assault on the king permitted heavy material sacrifice – no price is too great for the scalp of the enemy king.

(5) The prerequisite for a successful tactical manoeuvre (i.e. a forced combination) is that the attacker should have acquired certain positional advantages – 'a combination doesn't just fall from heaven' (M. Botvinnik).

These, then, are the most important principles of such attacks. They form the foundations for various scintillating attacks, which, in turn, are closely related to the unique features of individual pieces and the possibilities resulting from their interaction.

The Battering Ram

The pawn is the smallest weapon. Yet in this scant material significance lies its own peculiar strength. The most powerful of pieces fears its double-pronged attack, and material loss results when a piece is captured by a pawn. If the pawn successfully runs the gauntlet and reaches the back rank, it gets its reward by being changed into a proud queen or another piece (except the king, of course).

However, it is particularly valuable as a battering ram. It deviates from its straightforward movement in order to capture diagonally and, in so doing, it can open routes into the enemy camp for the other pieces to enter. As the smallest unit of worth, it requires least consideration, thus it is often sacrificed in order to break up an opposing pawn front.

Small, indeed, is its material value, but great is its strategic importance. It restricts the freedom of the opposing pieces, protects important strategic squares and hinders the advance of pieces and pawns. The steamroller effect of a widely strung pawn chain is dangerous and it is able to tie up the whole enemy force.

We shall now look at how pawns can increase the dynamic potential of the pieces.

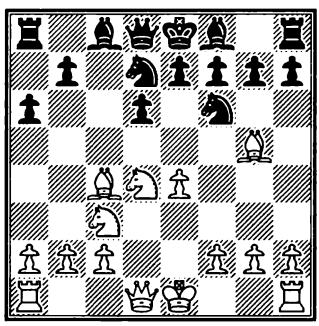
Game No. 5

Tal – Larsen

Interzonal tournament, Portoroz 1958

Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗g5 ♘bd7 7 ♗c4



LARSEN

Position after 7 ♗c4

TAL

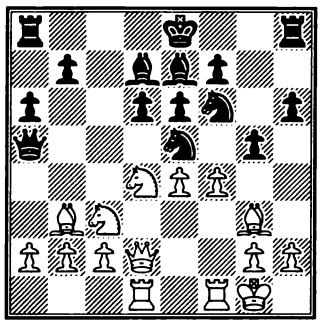
The development of the bishop on c4 is not without malice, as an unsuspecting player found out during the following game in 1951, 7 ... e6 8 0-0 b5? 9 ♗xe6 fxe6 10 ♘xe6 ♕b6 11 ♘d5 ♘xd5 12 ♕xd5 ♗b7 13 ♘c7+! followed by mate in two. **7 ... ♕a5 8 ♕d2 e6 9 0-0** Larsen undoubtedly expected 9 0-0-0, as Tal had played in a game against Kolarov. As was stressed earlier, it is often psychologically advisable to play lines which are not expected by an opponent. **9 ... h6 10 ♗h4 ♗e7 11 ♖ad1 ♘e5** I trust that you can see what happens after 11 ... 0-0.

* * * * * *

If 11 ... 0-0, then 12 ♘d5!

12 ♗b3 g5 This is, of course, a double-edged move, but after the more 'normal' continuation 12 ... ♘g6 13 ♗g3 ♗d7 14 ♘ce2! Black would have got into trouble. Pawn advances of this type are double-edged mainly because they offer means of opening files for the opposition.

13 ♗g3 ♗d7 14 f4!



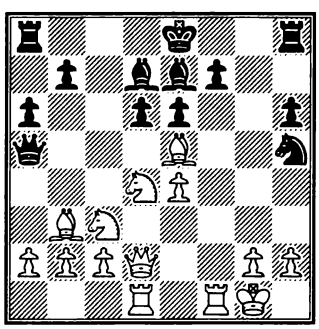
LARSEN

Position after 14 f4!

TAL

Wilhelm Steinitz, the first world champion, taught us that 'the chess master's plan must always be based upon an assessment of the position' – 'Yet assessment requires critical hunches to be followed,' writes Dr Lasker, 'as a consequence of which the composition of a plan is not founded upon the master's exact knowledge but upon positional understanding, which requires ability to evaluate the relative importance of various factors'.

The difficulty of assessing the move 14 f4 consists in that on the one hand this move opens the f-file for White, but on the other hand it grants Black permanent control over the focal point e5. One needs a deep positional understanding here, in order to decide which is worth the more. **14 ... gxf4 15 ♗xf4 ♘h5?** He should have been satisfied with dropping the queen back by playing 15 ... ♕c7. **16 ♗xe5!** Not 16 ♗xh6 because of ... ♘g4. The move played keeps the black king in the centre for some time.



LARSEN

Position after 16 ♗xe5!

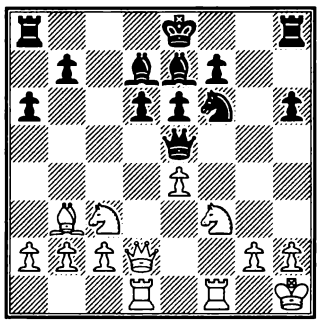
TAL

16 ... ♕xe5 This seems logical. Black wants to control e5. Moreover, Larsen did not like the alternative 16 ... dxe5 as much.

Question 7 **Why do you think that was?**

17 ♔h1

This is a favourite move of Tal's in positions like this. He wants to eliminate any embarrassing checks on the open diagonal. **17 ... ♘f6** The knight is misplaced at the side of the board and its position must be speedily improved. **18 ♘f3**



LARSEN

Position after 18 ♘f3

TAL

18 ... ♕h5? What was somewhat better than this? Can White really exploit this queen move?

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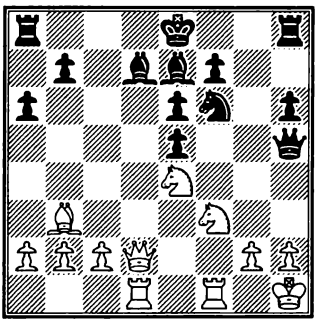
18 ... ♕c5 would have been relatively better, although Black would still have to contend with difficulties after 19 e5 dxe5 20 ♘e4 ♕c7 21 ♘xe5. However, after the text move, not only does the king get into trouble but also the queen is completely misplaced.

19 e5

The battering ram! It opens the queen file and frees e4 for the knight. Black's position now collapses like a house of cards. **19 ... dxe5 20 ♘e4!**



LARSEN

Position after 20 ♘e4

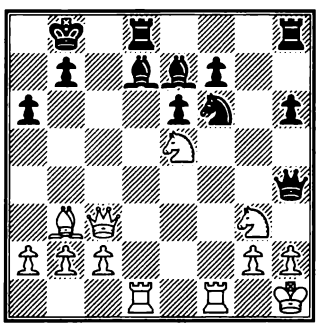
TAL

20 ... 0-0-0

Question 8 **Could Black try to castle on the kingside after 20 ... ♗c6 ?**

21 ♘g3 ♕g4 22 ♘xe5 ♕h4

Still hoping to complicate matters after 23 ♘xf7. However ... **23 ♕c3+! ♔b8**



LARSEN

Position after 23 ... ♔b8

TAL

24 ♘xd7+ Resigns.

After 24 ... ♘xd7 25 ♖xd7! it transpires that the rook on d8 is overworked – it cannot defend d7 and h8 at the same time. This is the typical result of a combinative attack. The game perhaps lacks brilliance but nevertheless it is instructive from beginning to end.

Errors in Opening Strategy

In the next game, it is worth noting the mistakes which Black makes in building up his position. Firstly Black lost time on an awkward knight manoeuvre, then his black-squared bishop disappeared from the scene, which consequently left the black squares defenceless, and finally he made a mechanical move with the queen which led to his downfall.

The most emphatic aspect of Tal's attacking strategy was the typical pawn march up the f-file. This is the simplest way to activate the rook on f1, after having castled on the kingside. Tal also managed to give his queen a threatening outpost to place his queen's rook on the half-open d-file and to activate his knight. After these unobtrusive preparations, he was able to capitalise upon the mistakes of his opponent with compact, effective tactics.

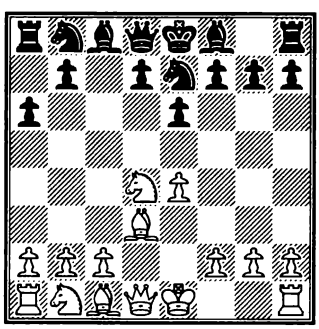
Game No. 6

Tal – Suetin

Tbilisi 1969

Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 a6 5 ♗d3 ♘e7



SUETIN

Position after 5 ... ♘e7

TAL

The beginning of a somewhat bizarre knight manoeuvre – the knight is to go to g6. What is one to make of this? Siegbert Tarrasch, that great German chess teacher, once declared that a knight on g6 is misplaced and belongs on the 'normal' square f6. Tarrasch was criticised at the time for making such dogmatic statements. Of course it was perfectly clear to Tarrasch, a very strong over-the-board player, that such rules can only serve as guidelines and that one needs to look at the realities of the position, and to consider the concrete requirements.

As I see it, Tarrasch wanted to give learners the idea that fundamentally one ought to place pieces actively, so that their work potential is at its maximum. Hence also his proverbial saying, 'knight at the side brings trouble and strife'. It is really not too difficult to see that a knight in the centre controls eight squares, whereas on h5 it only controls four and on g3 only six.

Indeed, it is a psychological mistake to conceive of our pieces as so many lumps of wood and perhaps thereby forget that a piece's mobility depends, as it were, upon its 'physiological' potential and thus upon the extent to which we manage to harness its inner power. For this purpose, the correct placing of a piece is crucially important.

It is in this aspect that the real chess artist appears to possess a magic wand. He understands how to breathe life into his pieces and how to give them work which is both active and effective. Often this mental process takes place unconsciously. But you must not think that these skills were acquired in the cradle! Certainly not! One is not born a grandmaster. The ability of the grandmaster appears after long years of exhaustive study and his experience is gained from both decisive victories and painful, yet instructive, defeats.

Also, he who now seems to perform his magic so effortlessly, once turned a deaf ear. He did not listen to the rook at a1, with its constant pleas to be allowed to take part in the action. If he had listened, he might also have heard the grumbling of the bishop, complaining about his own clumsy pawns which obstructed him from his dearly loved diagonal.

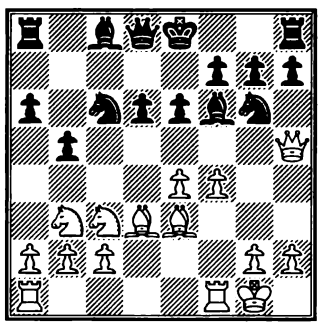
Indeed, we, the generals of our wooden armies, often forget that our pieces and pawns are animated by the desire to be as useful as possible to us – they want to play their part in the seizure of the enemy king.

But now let us turn back to the game. **6 ♘c3 ♘bc6 7 ♘b3** This is not a loss of tempo but is based on a concrete assessment of positional requirements, as another purpose of developing the black knight on e7 was to move it to c6 after the simplifying exchange of the other knight in the centre. **7 ... ♘g6 8 0-0 b5 9 ♗e3** A prophylactic move which is typical of such positions; White wants to play f4 and this bishop prevents a check on the diagonal. **9 ... d6 10 f4 ♗e7**

* * * * * *

11 ♕h5

Now we can clearly see the disadvantage of developing the knight on g6 – the mighty queen can establish herself, unhindered and threatening, in a dangerous attacking position. If the knight were on its more usual f6, then h5 would not be accessible to the queen. **11 ... ♗f6** Black moves about haplessly. The intended exchange on c3 will do no good.



SUETIN

Position after 11 ... ♗f6

TAL

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12 ♖ad1!

We give this innocuous-looking move an exclamation mark! White has clearly announced his aggressive intentions by ♕h5 but he does not make the mistake of attacking too hastily. This rook move of Tal's is to play an important role in preventing an unexpected raid by Black. How often do we become so immersed in the attack on the kingside that we forget all about the queen's rook and just leave it vegetating on its own square.

12 ... ♗xc3? Even grandmasters have their off-days! **13 bxc3 ♕c7 14 ♖d2** After the eventual opening of the f-file, this rook can be used to increase the pressure from f2. **14 ... ♘ce7**

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15 ♘d4!

Yet another informative exclamation mark. White's general does not forget his knight on b3, which stood so forlornly and inactively at the side of the board – from his improved position he is happy to make his contribution. **15 ... ♗d7**

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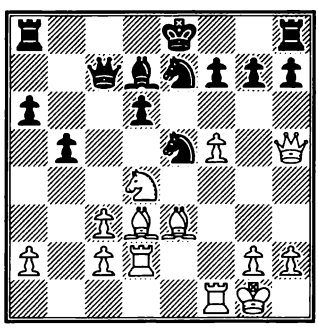
16 f5

Rudolf Teschner wrote in the *Deutsche Schachzeitung,* 'Tal doesn't wait any longer – he is a master at opening files'. Of course the resulting tactical twists have to be very precisely calculated because Black now has a grip on e5. **16 ... exf5 17 exf5 ♘e5**



SUETIN

Position after 17 ... ♘e5

TAL

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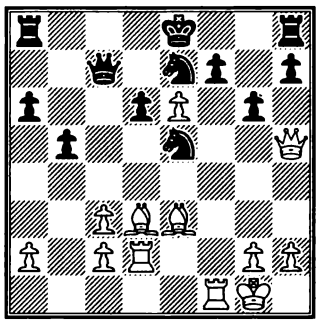
18 ♘e6!

The prelude to a lovely combination! Tal's opponent is forced to exchange on e6, after which the f-pawn not only opens the file for the rook but also acts as a raider on the sixth rank. Such pawns are potentially very dangerous. **18 ... ♗xe6 19 fxe6 g6** Expecting 20 ♕h3?, after which 20 ... f5 seems to thwart the immediate threat.



SUETIN

Position after 19 ... g6

TAL

20 ♕xe5!

A turn of events which Black had completely missed. **20 ... dxe5 21 exf7+ Resigns.**

The final position clearly illustrates the consequences of Black's faulty set-up. He is behind in development – both his rooks are still on their original squares. His black squares are unprotected as a result of the mistaken exchange on c3. There is a great hole on his g7 (21 ... ♔f8 22 ♗h6 mate).

Now look at the white rooks! The rook on f1 supports the advance of the pawn to f7 or even to f8 (if 21 ... ♔d8). The rook on d2 holds itself somewhat modestly in the background but it soon becomes clear that this background is an ambush.

Question 9 **Can White mate after 21 ... ♔d7 ?**

The bishop on e3 not only threatens mate on h6 after 21 ... ♔f8 but also controls the diagonal a1-g7 in case of 21 ... ♔d7. The pieces can do battle so effectively if their general sends them to the correct places.

Invasion Squares

The pawn plays an important part in defence. It guards the king, controls key strategic points and prevents opposing pieces from taking up strong positions. Accordingly, the attacking strategy of the aggressor often consists in attempting to force the opponent into making weak pawn moves. If this is successful, it often becomes possible to invade enemy territory via certain squares. The game which follows is a classic example of this strategy.

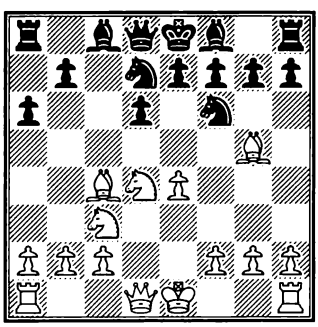
Game No. 7

Tal – Bilek

Interzonal tournament, Amsterdam 1964

Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗g5 ♘bd7 7 ♗c4



BILEK

Position after 7 ♗c4

TAL

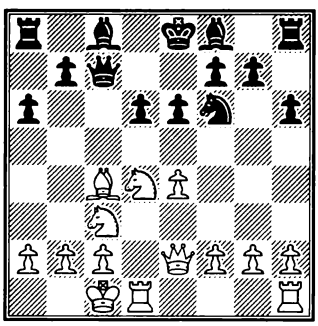
7 ... h6

A move which has far-reaching consequences: this pawn move concedes control of g6, weakens the diagonal h5-e8 and also the position of the king.

On the other hand, Black invites White to leave him with his pair of bishops, in the hope that he will be better able to stave off enemy attacks. However, Black's faith in the bishop pair proves to be misplaced in this case – yet one can hardly blame Black for failing to see the long-term consequences of this move. In order to capitalise upon the weaknesses ensuing from the move 7 ... h6, it required fine play, as Tal demonstrates in the game.

Anyway, if the pros and cons of every plan were completely clear, chess would lose its fascination. One thing, however, we can already establish – even an experienced player sometimes forgets that pawns cannot move backwards. So take care with pawn moves!

In the game Tal – Johansson (Stockholm 1960-61), Black first played the theoretical move 7 ... ♕a5 8 ♕d2 e6 9 0-0-0 b5 10 ♗b3 ♗b7 11 ♖he1 ♗e7 12 f4 ♘c5 13 ♗xf6 gxf6 14 ♔b1. Johansson could not resist the temptation to snatch a pawn by 14 ... b4? There followed 15 ♘d5 ♘xe4 16 ♖xe4 ♗xd5 17 ♗xd5 ♕xd5 18 ♕e2 ♕b7 19 ♖e3 d5 20 ♕h5! ♔f8 21 ♖xe6! Resigns. **8 ♗xf6** It pays to develop as quickly as possible. White has realised that the development of Black's bishops will be hampered by their own pawns. (The bishop pair require open positions and clear diagonals in order to function actively and harmoniously.) **8 ... ♘xf6 9 ♕e2 e6 10 0-0-0** By playing 11 e5, White now threatens to cross the demarcation line (the line which divides the board into two halves). It is easy to see that such pawn thrusts ensure spatial advantage. Indeed, in the Sicilian, the black pawn on d6 has the task of preventing the opposing pawn advancing to e5, and here this threat is particularly acute because after 11 e5 the d-file is opened and ♘xe6 follows. **10 ... ♕c7**



BILEK

Position after 10 ... ♕c7

TAL

* * * * * *

11 f4!

11 ♗b3 has been played but after 11 ... ♗d7 12 f4 turns out to be too late because Black can play 12 ... 0-0-0. The text move poses the serious positional threat e5. Which variations can Black now consider? How would Tal have coped with them?

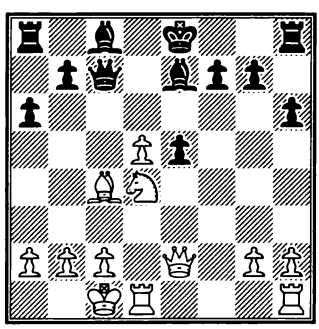
* * * * * *

(1) 11 ... ♘d7. The logical continuation, which prevents e5. Now, however, the weaknesses incurred by 7 ... h6 appear, 12 ♗xe6 fxe6 13 ♕h5+ ♔e7 14 ♘xe6 ♔xe6 15 ♕f5+ ♔e7, followed by the knight fork 16 ♘d5+.

(2) 11 ... ♗e7 12 e5 dxe5 13 fxe5 ♘d7 14 ♘xe6! fxe6 15 ♕h5+ ♔d8 16 ♗xe6 and Black's king position is in ruins.

(3) 11 ... ♗d7 12 e5 dxe5 13 fxe5 ♘h7 14 ♖hf1 with pressure on the f-file, which prevents castling long.

Black replies **11 ... e5** so White's pawn advance e4-e5 is automatically stopped, but Black must pay the price of weakening his d5 square. This concession weighs so heavily upon Black that White can be completely satisfied with the results of his plan. **12 ♘d5! ♘xd5 13 exd5 ♗e7 14 fxe5 dxe5**



BILEK

Position after 14 ... dxe5

TAL

* * * * * *

15 ♘e6!

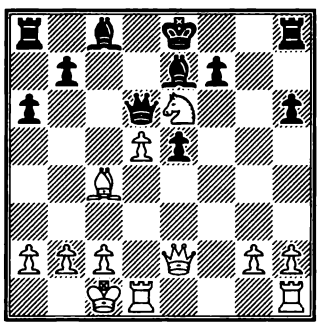
The removal of the d-pawn gives the knight a beautiful springboard from which to penetrate the enemy camp. **15 ... ♕d6**

> ***Question 10*** **Should Black have taken the knight?**

16 ♘xg7+ ♔f8

* * * * * *

17 ♘e6+ ♔e8



BILEK

Position after 17 ... ♔e8

TAL

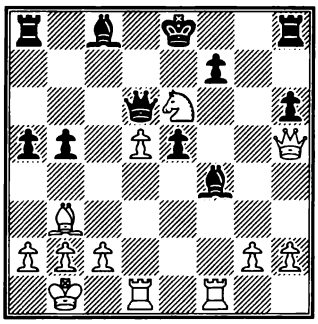
> ***Question 11*** **Is the acceptance of the knight any better now?**

18 ♖hf1

Threatening 19 ♖xf7! **18 ... ♗g5+ 19 ♔b1 b5**

* * * * * *

20 ♕h5! ♗f4 21 ♗b3 a5



BILEK

Position after 21 ... a5

TAL

* * * * * *

22 ♘c7+! ♕xc7 23 d6 Resigns.

After 23 ... ♕d7 24 ♖xf4! exf4 25 ♕e5+ wins.

The Knight Fork

When Black does not castle, the knight fork on c7 (sometimes called the family fork) can be particularly dangerous. In the first instance, of course, because it leads to the loss of the queen's rook; also, however, because the king must move and therefore loses its right to castle and gets caught in the crossfire of the enemy pieces. One certain disadvantage of this capture by the knight is that it often becomes difficult to extract from a8.

In the next game, Black tries to complicate matters by using ingenious tactical ideas, after having succumbed to one of these knight forks on c7. However, Tal proves to be a somewhat better tactician, and the exposed position of Black's king eventually spells his ruin.

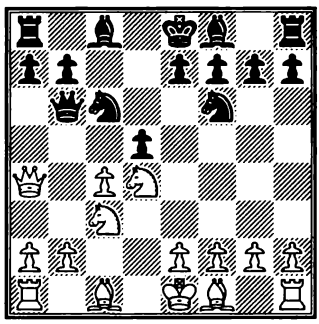
Game No. 8

Tal – Donner

Wijk aan Zee 1973

English Opening

1 c4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 ♘c6 4 d4 cxd4 5 ♘xd4 d5? Risky. Usual is 5 ... e6. White capitalises on this mistake by deploying his pieces effectively. **6 ♕a4!** Exploiting the weakness on the diagonal, as 6 ... ♗d7 can be met by 7 cxd5! **6 ... ♕b6**



DONNER

Position after 6 ... ♕b6

TAL

* * * * * *

7 ♘db5!

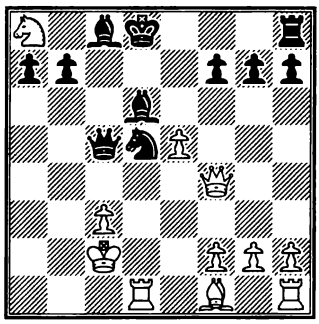
Threatening not only 8 cxd5, but also 8 ♗f4, which greatly increases the scope of the knights (harmonious combination of pieces!).

> *Question 12* **What had Tal planned against 7 ... d4 ?**

7 ... e6 8 ♗f4 e5 9 cxd5 exf4 10 ♕xf4

Now that the queen's bishop has gone, the queen comes to the aid of the knight. **10 ... ♘b4 11 ♘c7+ ♔d8 12 ♘xa8 ♕a5 13 0-0-0 ♕c5 14 e4! ♘xa2+ 15 ♔c2 ♘xc3 16 bxc3 ♗d6!?**

A little trap. **17 e5 ♘xd5** Black now expected 18 ♖xd5 ♕xd5 19 exd6 after which ... ♕a2+ would get equality, but what did Tal play?



DONNER

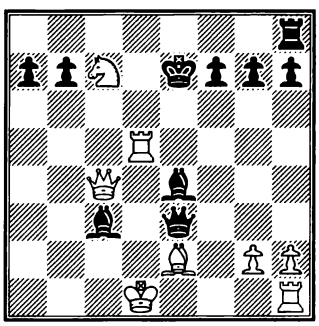
Position after 17 ... ♘xd5

TAL

* * * * * *

18 ♕c4! ♗f5+

Black has nothing better than to give a spite check. **19 ♔d2** Even in won positions one must be on the alert. Thus 19 ♔b2 would be committing suicide because of 19 ... ♕a3 mate. **19 ... ♕xf2+ 20 ♗e2 ♕e3+ 21 ♔e1 ♗xe5 22 ♖xd5+ ♔e7 23 ♘c7** The knight breathes easily again, having escaped from his prison. **23 ... ♗xc3+ 24 ♔d1 ♗e4**



DONNER

Position after 24 ... ♗e4

TAL

25 ♗f3 Resigns. After 25 ... ♗xf3+ 26 gxf3 ♕xf3+ White immediately decides the issue with the move 27 ♕e2+.

I Need to Use Force, do I?

Chess players are not always as kind-hearted as was the Dutch player Jan Hein Donner in the previous game, when he allowed the knight to get into such a dangerous attacking position on b5. Usually, in the Sicilian Defence, Black plays ... a6. This move has a double function; defensively it prevents the knight's advance to b5 and, offensively, it prepares the typical attacking plan ... b7-b5.

Yet in its capacity as an attacking pawn for Black, it sometimes becomes a target for White. Thus, after a preliminary bishop sacrifice, the knight still gets to b5 – 'If you are not going to oblige, I'll just have to use force' (Faust). After the bishop has been sacrificed, the consequences cannot be exactly calculated or foreseen because Black has an opportunity to select from different continuations. Clearly the attacker does not have complete material compensation for the bishop, but he is guided by the assumption that the lasting initiative that he gets will counterbalance the material loss (in this specific case, the threat of check by the knight on c7). Sacrifices of this kind require not only personal courage but also keen intuition and a sharp positional sense (see the chapter on The Relative Value of the Pieces').

Much pioneer work on the following variation was done by the Latvian master Alvis Vitolins. When Tal put this game, without annotations, into the weekly magazine *64,* he wrote in the Introduction, 'quite frankly, I am embarrassed about including this game because the variation was patented solely by Vitolins'.

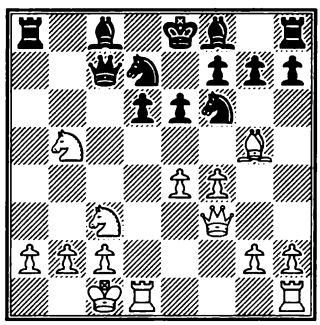
Game No. 9

Tal – Stean

Hastings 1973-74

Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗g5 e6 7 f4 ♘bd7 8 ♕f3 ♕c7 9 0-0-0 b5 10 ♗xb5!? 10 e5 has been played here, with the idea of exposing the enemy king after 10 ... ♗b7 11 ♕h3 dxe5 12 ♘xe6 fxe6 13 ♕xe6+. Yet the consequences of this line remain somewhat unclear – after all, a check doesn't finish anyone off! When Vitolins first tried out this variation, he had a definite advantage in terms of tournament tactics – whilst his opponent was forced to work out all the problems over the board, he himself could rely upon his analysis and thus play quickly. **10 ... axb5 11 ♘dxb5** The knight has forced itself onto b5. White wins a tempo as the queen is made to beat a humble retreat.



STEAN

Position after 11 ♘dxb5

TAL

11 ... ♕b8

Question 13 **What would happen after 11 ... ♕b6 ?**

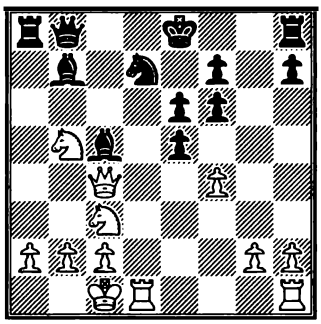
12 e5 ♗b7 13 ♕e2 dxe5

* * * * * *

14 ♕c4! ♗c5

> ***Question 14*** **How would you reply to 14 ... ♘c5 ?**

The game continued: **15 ♗xf6 gxf6**



STEAN

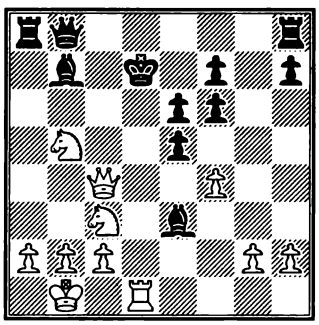
Position after 15 ... gxf6

TAL

* * * * * *

16 ♖xd7!

A typical forcing sacrifice. Not only does this move get rid of an important defender but it also draws out the king into the open and allows the king's rook to enter the fray with a gain of tempo. **16 ... ♗e3+ 17 ♔b1 ♔xd7 18 ♖d1+**



STEAN

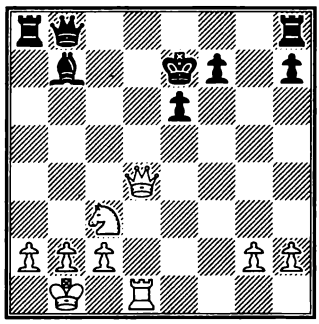
Position after 18 ♖d1+

TAL

18 ... ♗d4 In the game Vitolins – Anikayev (Riga 1973), there followed 18 ... ♔e8 19 ♘c7+, of course 19 ... ♔f8 20 fxe5 ♖a5 (if 20 ... fxe5, the

rook breaks into the seventh rank decisively 21 ♖d7) 21 exf6. At this point, Vitolins wrote, 'material considerations do not matter – White is going for mate!'. 21 ... ♗d5 22 ♘3xd5 exd5 23 ♕c3 ♖c5 24 ♕xe3 ♖xc7 25 ♖e1 h5 26 ♕a3+ Resigns.

19 fxe5 fxe5 20 ♘xd4 exd4 21 ♕xd4+ ♔e7



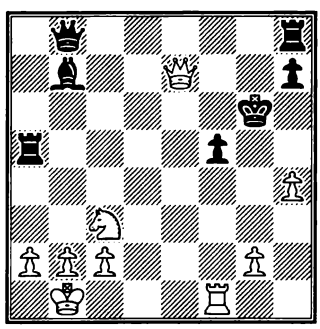
STEAN

Position after 21 ... ♔e7

TAL

22 ♕c5+! Forcing the king into the open, after which the usual king chase follows and Black is given no time to bring up reinforcements or to restore his position in any way. **22 ... ♔f6** If 22 ... ♔e8 then 23 ♘b5 followed by ♘c7+ decides immediately. The rest is easy. **23 ♖f1+ ♔g6 24 ♕e7 f5 25 ♕xe6+ ♔g7 26 ♕e7+ ♔g6 27 h4 ♖a5**

Please play through the final sequence precisely!



STEAN

Position after 27 ... ♖a5

TAL

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28 h5+!

Drawing the king into the mating net and preventing him from getting to the crucial square f7. **28 ... ♔xh5 29 ♕f7+ ♔h4 30 ♕f6+ ♔g3 31 ♕g5+ ♔h2 32 ♕h4+ ♔xg2 33 ♖f2+ ♔g1 34 ♘e2 mate**.

By Hook or by Crook

Grandmaster Alexander Tolush was one of those brave, fearless people. He was at his most dangerous when attacking, yet also resourceful in defence. However, in terms of tournament tactics, perhaps he ought to have tried to blunt Tal's attacking ambitions by choosing a more solid opening and simplifying the position, so that the attack could be nipped in the bud.

These were the tactics which Botvinnik employed to gain his revenge against Tal in the World Championship Match. When the board is laid bare, Tal's inner voice becomes silent almost to the point of inaudibility! Yet Tolush does not use this method – the intrepid old campaigner dares to lure the tiger from his den! As we shall see, he certainly succeeded in doing so – to the extent that by move 16 Tal had already managed to sacrifice three pawns and a piece. We must not criticise Tolush, as Tal was on song and he brought off one of his most glittering tactical victories.

Let us leave these more general considerations and turn to the chess itself. In this game, the first thing to note is the harmonious combination of the knight on b5 and the queen's bishop, followed eventually by the combined effect of all the white pieces. The tactical variations of the attack required precise calculation because White had always to consider the exposed position of his own king.

This game will give you a good opportunity to see into the workings of the 'calculating machine' of a grandmaster. However, don't forget to look for the variations yourself, before you read on!

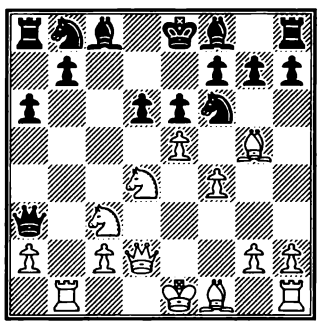
Game No. 10

Tal – Tolush

USSR Championship, Leningrad 1956

Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗g5 e6 7 f4 ♕b6 8 ♕d2 ♕xb2 9 ♖b1 ♕a3 10 e5

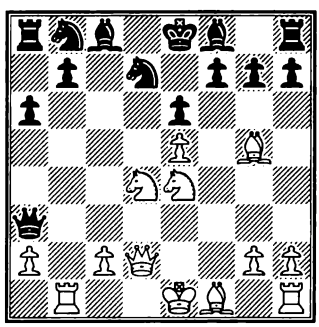


TOLUSH

Position after 10 e5

TAL

Nothing new so far. Thanks to the pawn sacrifice White has gained a few tempi in development and he can now take the initiative by crossing boldly over the demarcation line. **10 ... dxe5** Theoretically, in this defence, it is usually best to avoid opening up the game (here, the attack down the f-file), so, on the first glance, it seems more fitting to play 10 ... ♘fd7. Yet it has been shown in practice that in this specific instance Black cannot avoid loss of control on the f-file, 10 ... ♘fd7 11 f5 ♘xe5 12 fxe6 fxe6 13 ♗e2 ♘bc6 14 ♘xc6 bxc6 15 ♘e4 d5 16 0-0 ♕a4 17 ♗h5+ ♔d7 18 ♖xf8! Resigns (Keres – Fuderer, Goteborg 1955). **11 fxe5 ♘fd7 12 ♘e4**

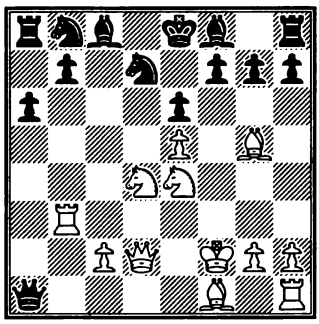


TOLUSH

Position after 12 ♘e4

TAL

12 ... ♕xa2 After two years of tireless striving, Tolush finally succeeded in improving this line for Black. He introduced 12 ... h6 13 ♗h4 and after 13 ... ♕xa2 14 ♖b3 ♕a1+ 15 ♔f2 ♕a4 16 ♗b5 axb5 17 ♘xb5 ♗c5+ 18 ♘xc5 it became clear why the bishop had been driven to h4; 18 ... ♕xh4+ 19 g3 ♕d8 with material advantage to Black. **13 ♖b3** 13 ... ♕d5 must be prevented. **13 ... ♕a1+ 14 ♔f2**



TOLUSH

Position after 14 ♔f2

TAL

14 ... ♕a4

Question 15 **What happens after 14 ... ♗c5 ?**

* * * * * *

15 ♗b5!?

White gets a menacing attacking position from this sacrifice; the knight now reaches the infamous b5 square! **15 ... axb5 16 ♘xb5 f6** It is clear that after protecting c7 by 16 ... ♘a6, the pressure on the black squares would be too much after 17 ♘bd6+ ♗xd6 18 ♕xd6

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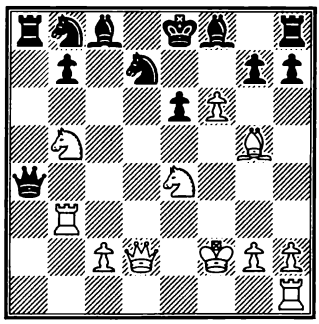
17 exf6



TOLUSH

Position after 17 exf6

TAL

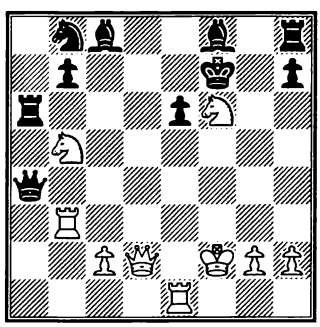
17 ... gxf6

Question 16 **What had Tal intended to play after 17 ... ♕xe4 ?**

(17 ... ♘xf6 might have been worth considering.)

18 ♖e1

Tal's craft has again got all his pieces into play. **18 ... ♖a6** Much worse was 18 ... fxg5 because of 19 ♘c7+ ♔d8 20 ♘xe6+ etc. **19 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 20 ♘xf6+ ♔f7**



TOLUSH

Position after 20 ... ♔f7

TAL

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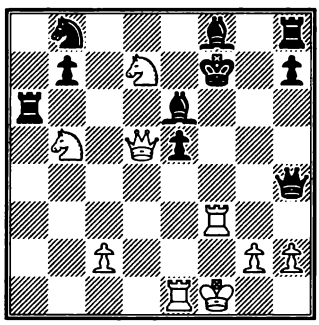
21 ♖f3!

All White's pieces are directed at the poor black king. Now 21 ... ♕xb5 fails to 22 ♘d5+ ♔e8 23 ♘c7+. **21 ... ♕h4+ 22 ♔f1 e5**

> ***Question 17*** **What would happen after 22 ... ♕c4+ ?**

23 ♕d5+ ♗e6 24 ♘d7+



TOLUSH

Position after 24 ♘d7+

TAL

24 ... ♔g6

> ***Question 18*** **Why not 24 ... ♔e7 ?**

25 ♘xe5+ ♔g7 26 ♖g3+ ♕xg3

Desperation, as 26 ... ♔f6 loses to 27 ♕d8+. **27 ♕xb7+ ♘d7 28 hxg3 ♖b6 29 ♕c7 ♗c5 30 ♘xd7 ♗c4+ 31 ♖e2** and Black overstepped the time limit.

The Trouble-Maker

In the previous examples, it was mainly the heavy pieces which penetrated the enemy positions, after the necessary preparations had been made by the minor pieces. In the examples which follow, again the fundamental strategic idea is to prevent the enemy king from castling. Either a bishop or a knight decides this factor after typical positions are reached.

We sometimes see the power of the bishop on a critical diagonal, preventing the opposing king from castling. As no one invites such trouble-makers willingly, these positions are often attained only with the aid of a sacrifice. The consequences of such sacrifices are difficult to see at first glance, because there are scarcely any forced variations.

Yet such is the nuisance value of these pieces, that sooner or later tactical possibilities arise, and this often becomes more evident upon closer inspection.

The piece cripples the opposition by splitting his forces in two – in particular it makes it more difficult for the opponent to unite his rooks. Just as the bishop causes trouble on an open diagonal, so the knight is a nuisance on a square near to the opposing king – it usually plants itself on e6 in order to make castling difficult.

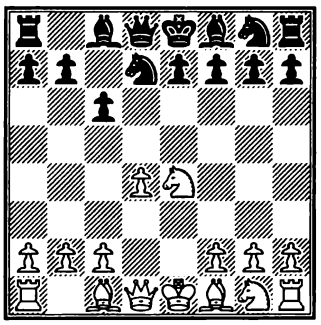
Game No. 11

Tal – Fuster

Interzonal tournament, Portoroz 1958

Caro-Kann Defence

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 dxe4 4 ♘xe4 ♘d7

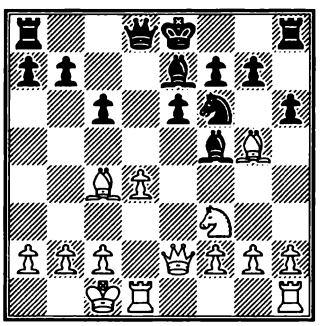


FUSTER

Position after 4 ... ♘d7

TAL

5 ♘f3 5 ♗c4 is also played here. Black must watch out for two common errors: 5 ... ♘gf6 6 ♘g5 e6 7 ♕e2 h6? 8 ♘xf7! Correct is 7 ... ♘b6 but after 8 ♗b3 the pawn on White's d4 is poisoned 8 ... ♕xd4? 9 ♘1f3 followed by ♘e5 and the capture of the pawn on f7. **5 ... ♘gf6 6 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 7 ♗c4 ♗f5** I trust you will not fall for 7 ... ♗g4? If 7 ... ♗g4 8 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 9 ♘e5+, not only does this free the knight, but it also regains the sacrificed piece by means of the fork, and White thus wins a pawn with a good position. **8 ♕e2 e6 9 ♗g5 ♗e7 10 0-0-0 h6**



FUSTER

Position after 10 ... h6

TAL

White stands somewhat freer. He threatens to tie down the king to the defence of f7 by playing ♘e5, thus making it difficult for Black to castle long. If Black castles short, he will have to meet an attack initiated by g4. So Black decides to simplify the position. This is indeed a standard principle in defence, but in this particular case, there are two drawbacks. Firstly, the pawn move is weakening because it may become a target for attack (*N.B.* Tal's 16th move). Secondly, however, as we shall soon see, the simplifying manoeuvre is refuted by surprising but fine tactics. Relatively best was 10 ... ♕c7, to prepare to castle on the queenside.

11 ♗h4 ♘e4

Also after the more solid 11 ... ♘d5 12 ♗g3 0-0 White stood freer.

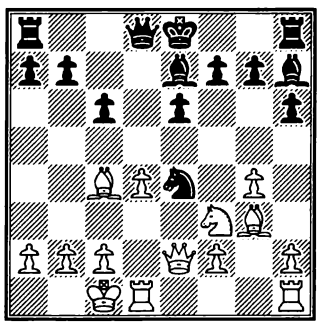
* * * * * *

12 g4

Excellent tactics. Now 12 ... ♗xh4 is a mistake because of 13 gxf5 ♘xf2 14 fxe6 with a strong attack. **12 ... ♗h7**

* * * * * *

13 ♗g3!



FUSTER

Position after 13 ♗g3!

TAL

Again beautiful play! White is prepared to accept the exchange for an open file. **13 ... ♘xg3 14 fxg3!** Players are wiser after the event – and always their own best critics! After the game, Fuster admitted that he had simply overlooked the capture with the f-pawn, otherwise he would have chosen the more resolute ... ♘d6. Now the pressure on f7 makes castling long very difficult, but what about castling short? Just wait and see! **14 ... ♕c7 15 ♘e5 ♗d6**

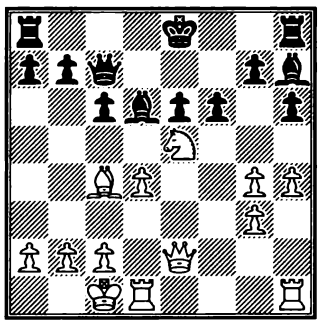
* * * * * *

16 h4

Posing future problems for the black king's safety. If 16 ... 0-0-0 there follows 17 ♘xf7 which destroys the support for the pawn on e6 and, if 16 ... 0-0, the drawback to move 10 ... h6 becomes evident – White jostles

the pawn with 17 g5 and threatens to open a file – a consequence of the far-sighted move 12 g4.

16 ... f6



FUSTER

Position after 16 ... f6

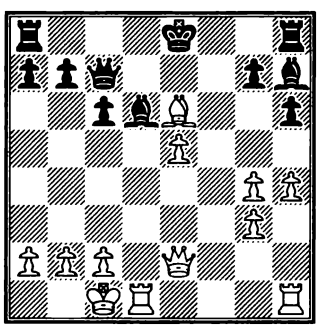
TAL

* * * * * *

17 ♗xe6!

Logical. The most important thing is to keep Black's king in the centre. Black had only reckoned with the simple retreat 17 ♘f3. After 17 ... 0-0-0 18 ♗xe6+ ♔b8 he would have got his king out of danger and he could contemplate regaining his sacrificed pawn. Also, the psychological explanation of many mistakes is that players assess positions too narrowly.

17 ... fxe5 18 dxe5



FUSTER

Position after 18 dxe5

TAL

18 ... ♗e7 Of course not 18 ... ♗xe5 because of 19 ♖he1 and after the bishop moves away, there follows a discovered check on c8 which shuts out the queen's rook. **19 ♖hf1!** The capture of the enemy queen often has a magnetic effect on us – yet, in this instance, after 19 ♗d7+ Black would get enough compensation by the return sacrifice 19 ♗d7+ ♕xd7 20 ♖xd7

♔xd7. But what is even more important in such positions is that, after these exchanges, the attacking potential of the aggressor is lessened. **19 ... ♖f8 20 ♖xf8+ ♗xf8**

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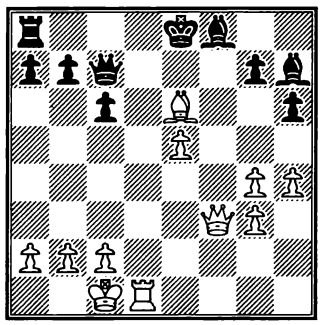
21 ♕f3!



FUSTER

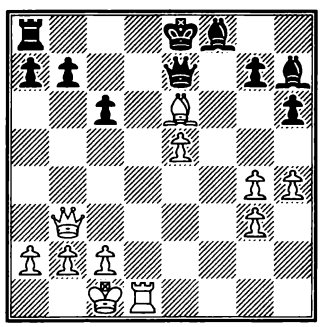
Position after 21 ♕f3!

TAL

Black now finds himself in a peculiar 'zugzwang' – he has no reasonable move! **21 ... ♕e7** 21 ... ♖d8 is, of course, refuted by 22 ♖xd8+ ♕xd8 23 ♕f7 mate.

22 ♕b3!

This move may be understood as a cunning tournament ploy. Tal saw that after 22 ♗d7+ ♕xd7 23 ♖xd7 ♔xd7 24 ♕f7+ ♗e7 25 ♕xg7 he could win the queen under favourable circumstances, but his opponent was in time trouble and under these circumstances a trap has good chances of succeeding. Is it still possible for Black to resist?



FUSTER

Position after 22 ♕b3!

TAL

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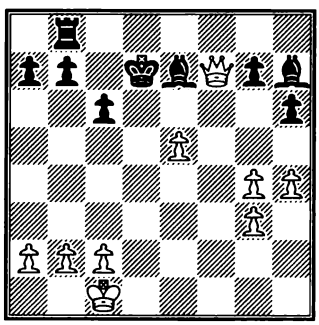
22 ... ♖b8?

The trap works beautifully. This 'logical' move was to be expected, because Black had to protect the pawn on b7 after the ever-present threat to capture his queen had been carried out (23 ♗d7+ ♕xd7 24 ♖xd7 ♔xd7 25 ♕xb7+!). But the unprotected rook turns out to be a tactical embarrassment and permits a decisive combination to be played (*N.B.* move 26!).

> ***Question 19*** **Has Black a defence here?**
> **For example, does 22 ... ♖d8 work?**

23 ♗d7+ ♕xd7 24 ♖xd7 ♔xd7 25 ♕f7+ ♗e7



FUSTER

Position after 25 ... ♗e7

TAL

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26 e6+! ♔d8

After 26 ... ♔d6 (attempting to give the rook some active possibilities) there follows the decisive combination on the diagonal 27 ♕f4+ followed by 28 ♕xb8.

Upon the text move play went **27 ♕xg7 Resigns**.

After 27 ... ♗e4, 28 ♕e5 would now win a piece because of the unprotected rook at b8, so Fuster conceded defeat.

The Highest Ideal

The following game is a particularly clear illustration of Mikhail Tal's fighting spirit. Throughout his play there flows a powerful energy; he strives constantly and almost boundlessly to produce harmony in his combinations by increasing the dynamic possibilities of his pieces. To achieve this is the highest ideal for a chess player and it serves as an aim for him in the turbulent battle.

In this game the Riga grandmaster does not hesitate to sacrifice three pawns, so that his bishop may get on a crucial diagonal and his rook obtain an open file. Of course, these sacrifices are not made without certain risks, as there are no immediate threats. Yet Tal relies on his intuition – he firmly believes that the source of a combination is to be found in active piece formation.

It may be worthwhile, at this point, to remind ourselves of how Emanuel Lasker interpreted the theory of positional play laid down by Steinitz.

According to Steinitz, equal positions remain equal with correct play. When this balance is disturbed, the player with the advantage has the chance to attack and play for a win. Steinitz elevates himself to the ranks of a true philosopher when he asserts that in the latter situation the player is even obliged to attack if he does not want to lose his advantage.

The insistence upon this as an 'obligation' is in a certain sense an ethical demand, which is extremely difficult to follow – yet the player who is ready to follow it can become a chess artist; he who is not ready can never be. In practical chess terms this obligation implies that you have to look for the combination which will lead to the realisation of your advantage. You must believe that the position contains such a possibility and if, after much laborious searching, you have not found it – carry on looking! It is possible, of course, that you have not got an advantage at all and that your conclusion rests upon a false assessment of the position. In that case you have to reappraise the situation.

Steinitz wants to help us in our quest for knowledge. He states that not only is the onus upon the player with the advantage to attack, but he advises him to direct his attack against any weaknesses which exist in the opponent's position. Steinitz likens a chess position to a chain composed of many links. He advises the attacker who is striving to break up the chain to find the weakest link and to steer his forces towards it. If a chain is quite secure there is no sense in looking for any such weaknesses. However, chains are not usually completely secure and the master shows his quality by finding the link of least resistance by careful and concentrated effort. He then attacks it!

In the following game, as you will see, Tal's play is based upon these principles. He does not allow the enemy rooks to combine in harmony and he forces the king into a beautifully becalmed position in the centre. This exposed position of the king becomes the weakness in the opponent's camp and Tal then directs his attack against it.

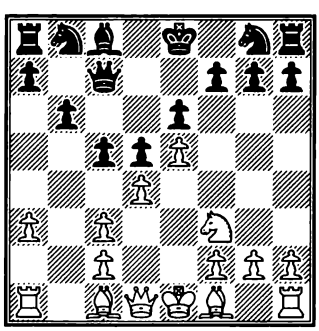
Game No. 12

Tal – Donner

Wijk aan Zee 1968

French Defence

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 ♗xc3+ 6 bxc3 ♕c7 7 ♘f3 b6



DONNER

Position after 7 ... b6

TAL

Let us look at this position somewhat more closely – it is typical of this line in the French Defence. The pawn position in the centre is fixed, but White has succeeded in crossing the demarcation line with his pawn, from

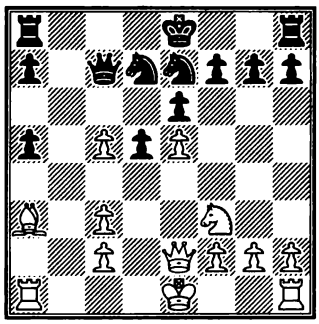
which he has derived a definite spatial advantage. The pawn on e5 prevents the most favourable development of Black's king's knight on f6, yet what is even more important is that the white diagonal to h7 is open and the square d3 awaits White's bishop. A further plus is that after the exchange of the black-squared bishops there will be weaknesses on Black's dark squares.

Yet one can also outline a few points in favour of Black's position, and his counter chances are based upon them. Firstly, he has broken up White's pawn formation, and this is very important psychologically. White must now guard against a casual transition into the endgame because, as is well known, pawn weaknesses in the endgame are a disadvantage. Therefore White has to look for his chances in a complicated middlegame, but this gives him a certain feeling of unrest and edginess – he has committed himself and now he has to walk the tightrope. Secondly, White constantly has to monitor Black's potential threats down the c-file. Thirdly, in order to restrict the mobility of the black-squared bishop, Black will attempt to keep the position closed because the lack of open diagonals practically nullifies the threat of the bishop. Finally, fourthly, if Black succeeds in blockading and keeping the position closed, the knight will become a very effective piece.

These assessments are usually made very quickly by strong players, and from the appraisal of the positional elements they form a corresponding strategic plan. Let us look at these ideas in specific chess terms.

Donner's last move (7 ... b6), has two purposes: Firstly, if the enemy 'spear' can be broken (the white-squared bishop) by 8 ... ♗a6, then a dangerous attacking piece is removed and this is in line with the plan. Secondly, the pawn on b6 keeps the pawn chain compact and closed. However, the move has its drawbacks. The consequent exchange of bishop costs time and allows White to gain tempi in development. Moreover, the pawn on b6 also serves as a target for White. Tal exploits both these drawbacks at once. **8 a4! ♗a6 9 ♗xa6 ♘xa6 10 ♕e2 ♘b8** The knight is chased back to its original square and is thus once more undeveloped. **11 a5!** White follows through his basic plan even at the expense of a pawn. The black pawn chain will be broken before the knight settles on c6 and prevents the pawn advance on the a-file. **11 ... bxa5 12 ♗a3** The bishop also has good possibilities on its own long diagonal, but the chances on the new diagonal are better still. **12 ... ♘d7 13 dxc5 ♘e7** Clearly intending

14 ... ♘c6 with the idea of blockading the c-pawn and thus condemning the white bishop to the passive role of staring at its own pawn.



DONNER

Position after 13 ... ♘e7

TAL

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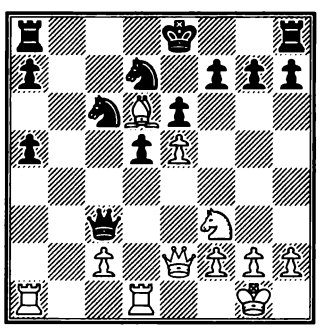
14 c6!

Look how the bishop has more life after this move – its effectiveness has increased immensely. It now reigns supreme over the unprotected black squares and it performs the most important task of preventing Black from castling. After the 'logical' move 14 0-0, Black could have easily achieved his aim of blockading the position by occupying c6 with his knight. **14 ... ♕xc6! 15 0-0 ♕xc3!** The capture of the second pawn indeed looks risky but it is clearly the best move. It is of less importance here that a pawn is won than that the queen controls d4 from c3. Also, the attack on White's bishop limits his mobility. **16 ♖fd1 ♘c6 17 ♗d6**



DONNER

Position after 17 ♗d6

TAL

White has carried through his plan to prevent his opponent from castling, at the expense of two pawns. His next task, which is far from easy, will be to make practical use of the position by use of tactics. **17 ... ♕c4 18 ♕e3 ♕e4 19 ♕b3** Further simplifications are averted. White's plan is to attack, so the queen, as the strongest attacking piece, must avoid being exchanged. After 19 ♕g5 Black could continue with the somewhat strange-looking reply 19 ... ♕g6. **19 ... ♘b6!** 19 ... ♘cxe5 would have been mistaken because of 20 ♘xe5 followed by ♕b7 with the double threat on the rook and the mate on e7. The text move seems to protect all possible invasion squares and Black now threatens to unite his rooks after playing ... f6 and ... ♔f7. Has White's attack come to a standstill? How is he to rekindle the fire?

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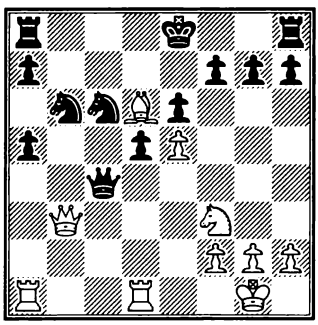
20 c4!

This third pawn sacrifice opens the c-file. Once more Tal's opponent has serious problems. **20 ... ♕xc4**



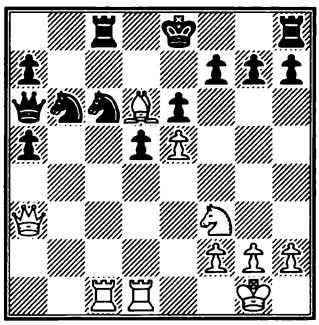
DONNER

Position after 20 ... ♕xc4

TAL

Question 20 **Which other variations did Tal have to consider?**

21 ♕a3 ♕a6 22 ♖ac1 ♖c8



DONNER

Position after 22 ... ♖c8

TAL

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23 ♘d2!

By itself, the strong position of the bishop is not enough – without reinforcements White's attack cannot penetrate. The text move prepares the powerful switch of the queen to g3, after which the unprotected g-pawn is attacked, and if Black plays 24 ... g6 then 25 ♕g5 threatens ♖xc6. Perhaps Black ought to have prevented the text move by playing 22 ... ♘c4.

In this position, Donner offered a draw, which Tal firmly rejected. Was his refusal simply based on chess grounds? We do not want to be hasty but one thing is clear – Tal had completely outplayed his opponent psychologically. Tal's ceaseless élan had certainly ground him down psychologically and exhausted him – perhaps inflicting something like a hypnotic paralysis on him. Also there was the important fact that Black was getting into time trouble. Whatever the case may be, Tal's rejection so disconcerted Donner that he made a serious error with his very next move! **23 ... f6?** This weakens not only the pawn formation but also a crucial diagonal on the kingside. All White's pieces now become extremely active. The question still remains as to whether Black had anything better, which might have made White's task more difficult. The Soviet master Vasily Panov made the following observation, 'White not only threatens ♘b3-c5 but also to transfer his queen on to the kingside. By playing 23 ... ♘d4! Black could have countered this threat. After 24 ♖xc8+ ♕xc8 25 ♕xa5 (25 ♕b2 ♕c3!) 25 ... ♕d7 26 ♔h1 (not, however, 26 ♖c1 or 26 ♕c3 because of ♘e2+) Black could play 26 ... f6 quite happily. However, Tal

had planned to complicate matters further, if 23 ... ♘d4, by continuing with 24 ♔h1! **24 exf6 gxf6**

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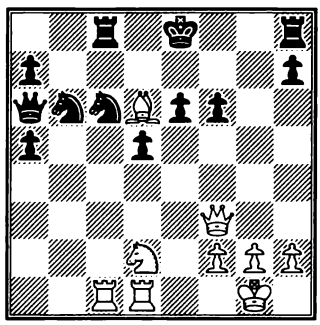
25 ♕f3!



DONNER

Position after 25 ♕f3!

TAL

Question 21 **What is now White's strongest threat?**

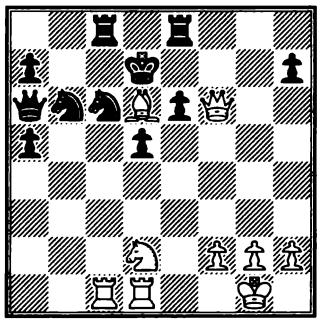
25 ... ♔d7

Perhaps Black had decided that by attacking the bishop and forcing it to retreat, he would thereby gain an important tempo which he could use to defend f6. 25 ... ♔f7 would have lost to the simple but instructive 26 ♕h5+ ♔g7 27 ♖c3! (the heavy pieces combining in harmony against the exposed enemy king!). Panov mentioned the following attractive smothered mate after 25 ... ♘d7 26 ♕g4 (threatening 27 ♕g7) 26 ... ♔d8 27 ♕xe6 ♖e8 28 ♕xd5 ♕e2 29 ♘c4 ♕e6 30 ♘xa5! ♕xd5 31 ♘b7 mate.

Question 22 **Can you improve on Black's defence here?**

26 ♕xf6! ♖he8

Again 26 ... ♔xd6 is refuted by tactics, 27 ♘e4+ ♔c7 28 ♘c5! followed by 29 ♕g7+.

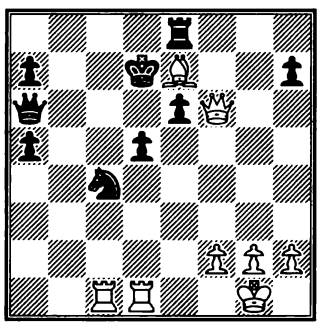


DONNER

Position after 26 ... ♖he8

TAL

27 ♘e4 The knight cannot be touched because of 28 ♕f7+. **27 ... ♘e7 28 ♘c5+ ♖xc5 29 ♗xc5 ♘c4 30 ♗xe7**



DONNER

Position after 30 ♗xe7

TAL

Black Resigns. If 30 ... ♖xe7 the 'decoy' sacrifice wins, 31 ♖xd5+ ♘d6 32 ♖c7+ ♔xc7 33 ♕xe7+ etc.

A good example of the types of game which were much discussed several years ago and attributed to 'the incredible luck of Mikhail Tal', or 'the hypnotic gaze of Mikhail Tal'. More appropriate than 'luck' or 'hypnosis' may be what Panov wrote about this instructive game, 'once again we meet well-known phenomena in competitive sport – it is the will to win, self-confidence and the courage to take risks which lead to success'.

The Trojan Horse

It was previously pointed out, in the introduction to Game No. 11, that a knight on e6 can greatly hamper enemy development. Whilst the bishop, from its long-range vantage point, is more difficult to attack, a knight on e6 can easily be challenged, even by the king itself. So, in the case of the knight, the aggressor has to get reinforcements quickly, to support his foothold in the enemy camp. In the next game Tal's sacrifice does not deal a really decisive blow at the opposing king. However, he is able to exert positional pressures upon his opponent's position and this results in his being able to pull a few tactical tricks out of the bag at the appropriate moment.

Game No. 13

Tal – Polugayevsky

USSR Championship, Tbilisi 1959

Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗g5 ♘bd7 7 ♗c4 ♕a5 8 ♕d2 e6 9 0-0 ♗e7 Now Tal begins to centralise his rooks. **10 ♖ad1 ♘c5 11 ♖fe1 ♗d7**

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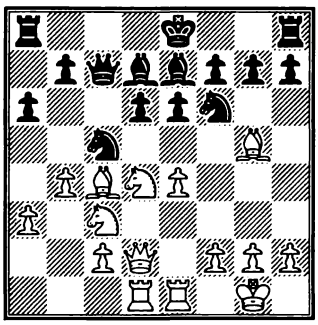
12 a3!

A simple-looking move, but one which reveals the deficiences in Black's piece set-up. The queen has to retreat because of the threatened pawn fork. **12 ... ♕c7 13 b4!**



POLUGAYEVSKY

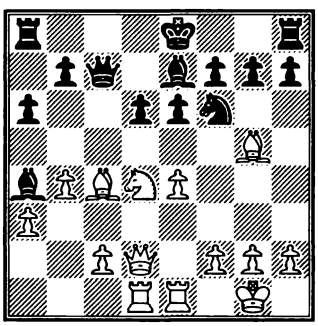
Position after 13 b4!

TAL

13 ... ♘a4

> ***Question 23*** **Consider carefully what White would play after three other possible defences here: (1) 13 ... ♘cxe4 (2) 13 ... b5 (3) 13 ... ♖c8.**

14 ♘xa4 ♗xa4



POLUGAYEVSKY

Position after 14 ... ♗xa4

TAL

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15 ♗xe6! fxe6 16 ♘xe6 ♕xc2 17 ♕d4

Of course. He needs the queen to support the attack. If one takes a quick look at this position, it is really strange – White has only one single pawn as compensation for the piece which he has sacrificed. So he sizes up his positional advantage: his pieces are better developed and he has the initiative! Of course, you need courage, self-confidence and optimism to play chess like this! **17 ... ♔f7 18 ♖c1 ♕a2 19 e5!**

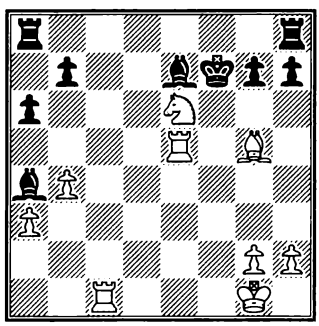
Question 24 **Would 19 ♘xg7 not have been more dangerous?**

19 ... dxe5

Also in the following variation, the sacrifice does not end in mate but in positional pressure: 19 ... ♕xe6 20 exf6 ♗xf6 21 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 22 ♕d5+ ♔f8 23 ♕xb7 ♖e8 24 ♕xa6 and White's united passed pawns are highly dangerous. **20 ♕xe5 ♕xf2+** Black forces the transposition into the endgame, because the attempt to get more with 20 ... ♖he8 is refuted by a combination.

Question 25 **Can you see it?**

21 ♔xf2 ♘g4+ 22 ♔g1 ♘xe5 23 ♖xe5

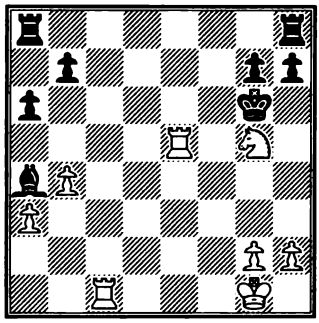


POLUGAYEVSKY

Position after 23 ♖xe5

TAL

Tal undoubtedly considered this transposition into the endgame before he embarked upon this combination. He went in for it because, in spite of the material reduction, the centralised pieces are actively placed. Indeed, the black king gets no peace as he is now threatened with 24 ♖f1+ ♗f6 25 ♘xg7! **23 ... ♗xg5 24 ♘xg5+ ♔g6**



POLUGAYEVSKY

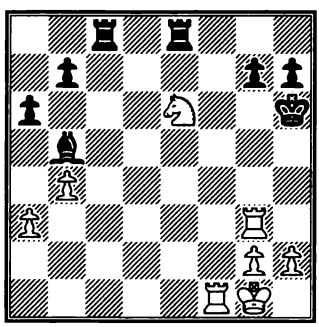
Position after 24 ... ♔g6

TAL

25 ♘e6

Question 26 **The immediate king hunt 25 ♖e6+ again ends in shadow chasing. Do you see why?**

25 ... ♖he8 26 ♖e3! ♖ac8 27 ♖f1! This avoids exchanging the rook which can now still take part in the assault on the king. **27 ... ♗b5 28 ♖g3+ ♔h6**



POLUGAYEVSKY

Position after 28 ... ♔h6

TAL

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29 ♘xg7!

A spirited horse! The agony that follows is short-lived. **29 ... ♖f8** Here, Black ought to have played 29 ... ♗xf1 30 ♘xe8 ♖xe8 31 ♔xf1. Admittedly, White would still have winning chances, but they would have

been fraught with the technical difficulties which beset all rook endgames. One has to choose the lesser of two evils – the one which causes most trouble for the opponent. **30 ♖e1 ♖f6** Also after 30 ... ♗d7 31 h3 ♖f7 32 ♖e4, mate is unavoidable. **31 h3** A breathing space for the king. **31 ... ♖c2 32 ♖e4 ♖c4 33 ♖e5 ♖c1+** A desperate last check! **34 ♔h2 Resigns**.

A Relatively Weak Point

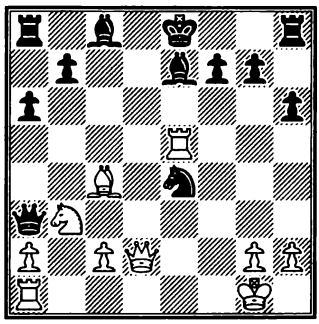
Not difficult to guess – the weak point is f7. Perhaps it is because of this very square that Mikhail Tal was bestowed upon the chess world by Caissa, Goddess of Chess. Tal lost to his cousin several times, by Scholar's mate (1 e4 e5 2 ♗c4 ♗c5 3 ♕h5 d6 4 ♕xf7 mate). As the nine-year-old boy did not like this and did not want it to continue, he began to do a bit of research. He soon discovered the refutation of this deadly threat, and the game had got him completely under its spell.

After the opening moves 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗c4, Black is already aware of the opposing bishop, which clearly has designs upon his f-pawn. In practice, Black has enough resources in this line to protect the crucial square; yet the fact that only the king protects the f-pawn creates a tense situation, because a sacrifice can immediately draw the king into an exposed position. Of course, after sacrifices of this type, the attacker has to have sufficient reserves at his disposal to continue the assault on the king.

Tal – Zaid

Simultaneous Game, Moscow 1972

We have missed out the opening moves – you will recognise them from the previous games.



ZAID

Position after 18 ... ♘xe4

TAL

It is easy to see that Black has captured the b-pawn in the Sicilian Defence. Black has just captured a knight by 18 ... ♘xe4. He undoubtedly expected 19 ♖xe4, after which he would get his king to safety by 19 ... 0-0, and in this event there would be no tangible gains from White's superior development. Now, however, Tal shows how the relative weakness at f7 can be exploited, but perhaps you would like to do some analysis yourself first of all.

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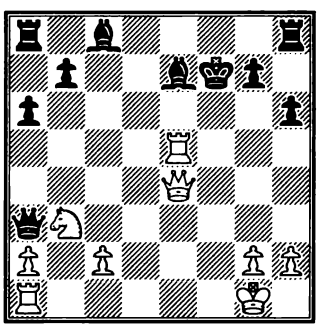
19 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 20 ♕d5+ ♔g6 21 ♕xe4+ ♔f7



ZAID

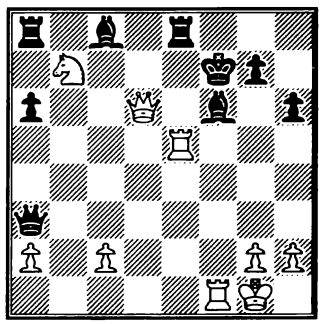
Position after 21 ... ♔f7

TAL

What has happened? White has ignored material, which is one of the fundamental issues in chess. His opponent possesses definite material advantage – a whole bishop. It was clear to Tal that the sacrifice was not without risk but he was also aware that it was based upon positional logic. The black king was driven into an unsafe position and that is a real positional factor!

This positional advantage can disappear very easily if Black succeeds in developing and getting his king into safety. Therefore the most important thing in such positions is to maintain the initiative, to harass the defender constantly and to keep him under pressure. In order to do this, one needs not only a readiness to take risks but also deep positional understanding and excellent sacrificial technique.

22 ♖f1+ Typical in the haste of simultaneous play – or does even a Tal succumb sometimes to the hypnotic power of a check? Analysis by Tal and myself showed that White's attack would have been more effective after 22 ♕d5+ ♔g6 23 ♖f1 ♗f6 24 ♖e3 ♕b4 25 ♖g3+ ♗g5 26 ♕d3+ etc. **22 ... ♗f6 23 ♘c5 ♖e8 24 ♕d5+ ♔f8 25 ♕d6+ ♔f7** Does White have to be satisfied with a repetition of moves? **26 ♘xb7?**



ZAID

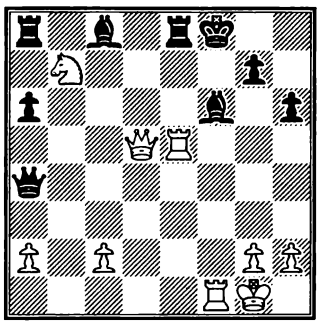
Position after 26 ♘xb7?

TAL

This is typical of Tal – in the heat of battle, he often oversteps the limit of what is permissible because he is driven by the urge to go forward and give his opponent further problems. This urge was one of the hidden components possessed by that other ingenious player, Alekhine. **26 ... ♕a4?** The same phenomenon appears, as in the game against Donner (No. 12). Is it luck or the natural psychological result of such nerve-racking play? We shall return to this question again, in the annotations to move 36 of the next game (Tal – Simagin). In the present game, Tal's opponent could have got winning chances.

Question 27 **How? To give you a clue we might say that excitement can lead to mechanical thinking – one feature of which is undue respect for the strength of the queen and this in turn leads to an unwillingness to give it up. So Black's move could be put under the heading of 'mistakes made as a result of mechanical thinking.'**

27 ♕d5+ ♔f8



ZAID

Position after 27 ... ♔f8

TAL

Despite the strength of the queen, she alone can accomplish nothing against the enemy king. This becomes quite evident, for example, in the simple endgame, king and queen versus king, in which victory is only possible when both pieces combine. Tal's next move well illustrates how the attacking power of the queen is increased when the other pieces combine with her. **28 ♘d6** The knight hurries to help, and Black is powerless as the two pieces combine in harmony. The principle of co-ordinated advance! **28 ... ♗e6 29 ♖xe6 Resigns.**

Boomerang

The next game, like the last one, illustrates the intuitive sacrifice, so we shall take the opportunity to discuss more closely this kind of sacrifice (in which a genuine sacrifice is brought about for which the aggressor does not get full material compensation).

Of course, the sacrificer does not go away completely empty-handed; he gets a dynamic equivalent – namely, the initiative. The consequences of such sacrifices are usually not exactly calculable, as the opponent has a comparatively free choice from the different defensive possibilities. Thus,

the aggressor is not able to follow a clearly outlined attacking plan but proceeds on the assumption that the lasting initiative will counterbalance the material deficit. Naturally, such sacrifices are not without risk because dynamic compensation of this kind is highly unpredictable and may disappear at the slightest provocation (as was the case in the previous game versus Zaid after 21 ♖f1+). Also, when one makes intuitive sacrifices, one ought not to lose sight of the accepted scale of values for piece exchanges. For instance, it has been established, from long years of practical experience, that the queen is worth two rooks or three minor pieces and a minor piece is equal to three pawns. The person who sacrifices understands readily enough that in specific instances, the value of the pieces is relative, so that in the act of combining, a complete upheaval of all values can take place (mass is converted into powerful, dynamic energy!). The scale of values has yet another function in intuitive combinations – it acts as a warning to the attacker not to get too far away from the customary values unless he is to step outside the bounds of possibility.

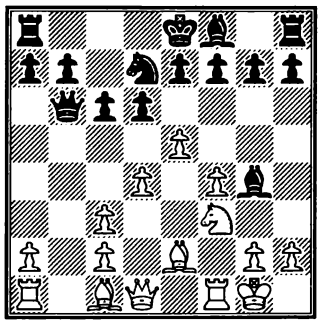
Game No. 14

Tal – Simagin

USSR Championship, Leningrad 1956

Irregular Defence

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 f4 ♕b6 4 ... ♕a5 seems to be more active. According to Simagin, after 5 ♗d2 ♕b6 6 ♘f3 Black can take the b-pawn but, admittedly, this loses a lot of time. **5 ♘f3 ♗g4 6 ♗e2 ♘bd7 7 e5!** Simagin was a very talented grandmaster who liked to go his own way, but his liking for an original, rather than a more routine set-up, was not always in complete harmony with the requirements of opening theory. As we see in the present instance, he gives his opponent a spatial advantage without getting any compensation for it. **7 ... ♘d5 8 0-0 ♘xc3 9 bxc3**



SIMAGIN

Position after 9 bxc3

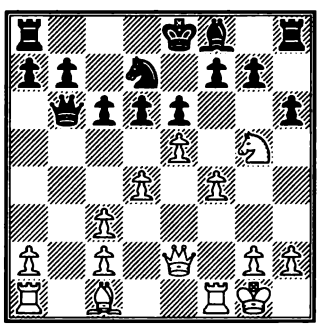
TAL

9 ... e6? An instructive, and fairly common 'slip of the hand', Black intended to play 9 ... ♗xf3 10 ♗xf3 and then 10 ... e6, after which Black has a tenable position, in Simagin's opinion. However, he chose the wrong move order, and this is already an almost decisive error. Why is this?

* * * * * *

10 ♘g5 ♗xe2 11 ♕xe2

Now we can see why the king's knight ought to have been exchanged – it has taken up a particularly threatening position. **11 ... h6**



SIMAGIN

Position after 11 ... h6

TAL

Simagin gave this move an exclamation mark and made the following observation, 'The best chance. I saw that 11 ... ♗e7 could be answered strongly by 12 f5! so I decided to provoke my opponent into making the subsequent sacrifice. I was quite aware that Tal could get a dangerous

attack on my king, but in the course of such sacrificial attacks it is not always easy to find the strongest moves'. We shall see that this assessment of Simagin's is only partially confirmed and finally it proves to 'boomerang' on him!

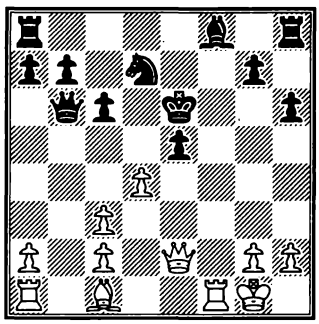
12 ♘xf7! ♔xf7

* * * * * *

13 f5!

The point! Now a file is opened for the rook on f1 and the king is forced out into an unsafe position. **13 ... dxe5** By playing 13 ... ♘xe5, Black would only add grist to White's mill (14 ♔h1!).

14 fxe6+ ♔xe6



SIMAGIN

Position after 14 ... ♔xe6

TAL

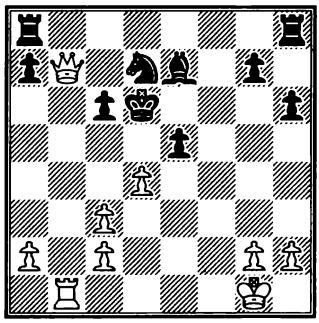
How should the game continue? In such positions we are instinctively drawn towards an immediate king hunt, but this would come to nothing here after 15 ♕g4+ ♔d6 16 ♗a3+ ♔c7 or 15 ♕c4+ ♔d6. Tal now shows his marvellous resourcefulness.

* * * * * *

15 ♖b1! ♕xb1

In simple material terms, it does not look too bad for Black as he has enough for the queen – but Tal has a lead in development! The acceptance of the rook is practically forced, because the position of Black's king

would become highly critical after 15 ... ♕a6 16 ♕g4+ ♔d6 17 dxe5+ ♔c7 18 ♗f4. **16 ♕c4+ ♔d6 17 ♗a3+ ♔c7 18 ♖xb1 ♗xa3 19 ♕b3 ♗e7 20 ♕xb7+ ♔d6**



SIMAGIN

Position after 20 ... ♔d6

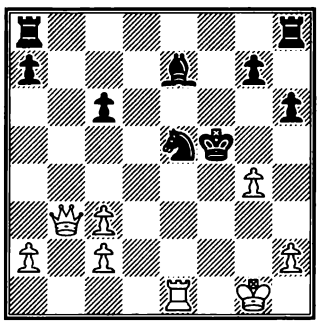
TAL

21 dxe5+?

Simagin was not completely mistaken – even a Tal is not immune from stumbling along the way. Instead of the obvious check, Ragozin pointed out a winning move.

> ***Question 28*** **Can you find it?**

After this mistake, Tal has to win the game all over again. **21 ... ♘xe5 22 ♖d1+ ♔e6 23 ♕b3+ ♔f5 24 ♖f1+ ♔e4 25 ♖e1+ ♔f5 26 g4+**



SIMAGIN

Position after 26 g4+

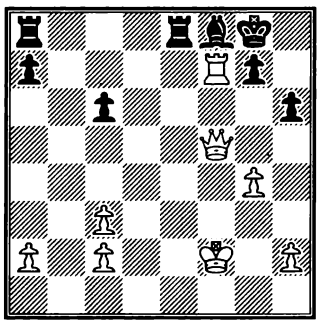
TAL

26 ... ♔f6

> ***Question 29*** **What would happen after 26 ... ♔f4 ?**

27 ♖f1+ ♔g6

If 27 ... ♔g5, then 28 ♕e6! would again win. **28 ♕e6+ ♔h7** Black cannot avoid losing a piece, 28 ... ♗f6 29 ♕f5+ ♔f7 followed by 30 ♕xe5. **29 ♕xe5 ♖he8 30 ♖f7** This looks active, but it would have been safer to protect the second rank by playing 30 ♖f2. Yet Tal is hatching an almost crazy plan. **30 ... ♗f8 31 ♕f5+ ♔g8 32 ♔f2**

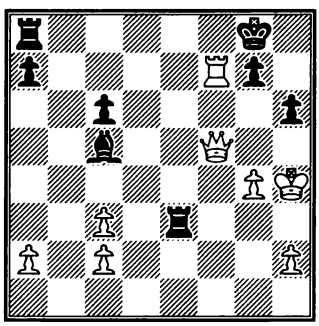


SIMAGIN

Position after 32 ♔f2

TAL

Let us see what Simagin had to say about this move. 'Unbelievable – but true. White has decided to bring his king into the attack; he intends to march into enemy territory via f2-g3-h4-h5-g6.' Of course this plan endangers the white king and thus increases Black's defensive resources. White might have played the safer 32 ♕g6 ♖e1+ 33 ♖f1. **32 ... ♗c5+ 33 ♔g3 ♖e3+ 34 ♔h4**



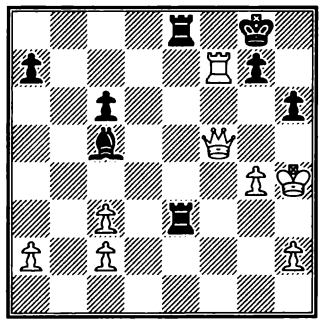
SIMAGIN

Position after 34 ♔h4

TAL

34 ... ♖ae8! The queen's rook was clearly fed up with standing idle on its own square. If 34 ... ♗e7+, Tal had planned 35 ♔h5 ♖d8 36 ♖xg7+ ♔xg7 37 ♕g6+ ♔f8 38 ♕xh6+ ♔f7 39 ♕xe3, intending to exploit the loose rook on e3. However, he succumbed to a thinking error which occurs so frequently in combinations that it could almost be called 'typical'; he had not noticed that in the course of the combination, the h-file is opened

and Black can play 39 ... ♖h8+, after which he gets a tenable endgame. If 34 ... ♗e7+ White has to play 35 g5.



SIMAGIN

Position after 34 ... ♖ae8

TAL

* * * * * *

35 ♖xg7+

This 'desperado' sacrifice is played before the queen captures the bishop – it is necessary because otherwise White's king would be in danger after 35 ♕xc5 ♔xf7 threatening 36 ... g5+ 37 ♔h5 ♖h3 mate. **35 ... ♔xg7 36 ♕xc5 ♖8e6?** The last, and decisive error in this comparatively simple position. It is clear that the a-pawn must be defended. After 36 ... ♖8e7 37 ♕xc6 ♖f7, Black then threatens 38 ... ♖ff3. Simagin made the following comment on his mistake, 'In the fifth hour a position can get to be incomprehensible!' Indeed, the fifth hour is a problem. Grandmasters so often get caught during this period. How many beautifully conceived ideas come to grief because of horrible mistakes in this critical hour! Why should this be?

This phenomenon is explicable if we take a closer look at the changes in mental states of the grandmaster during the game. When a grandmaster sits at the board for the first move, he is a rational, clear-headed human being who is alert and self-confident. By the fifteenth move, we see quite another grandmaster sitting there; here is a person who is displaying the first traces of nervous tension, who is in the grip of a complicated struggle, whose every look is heavy with concentration – for each move is rife with unseen danger.

However, despite this tension, he must keep cool, so that he can make an objective assessment of his chances in the position. He is the general; he

has to recognise his opponent's plans and try to offset them. At the same time, however, he has to devise and execute his own. Naturally, this complex process on the chess board has its effects upon his mental state. In the comparatively short span of five hours the mind of the grandmaster has a great deal to digest – joy, dismay, hope and disappointment. The harder his opponent fights, the more difficult it becomes to maintain concentration and to keep clear-headed. During the fifth hour an unexpected move can disconcert the most disciplined of players.

This wear and tear on the nerves has led to some grandmasters developing economy measures, by which they can conserve their nervous energy. They automatically trot out sound opening systems and they evade early complications; they get themselves an extra free day by agreeing 'grandmaster' draws and other such ploys. However, both Tal and Simagin typify the modern romantic school in chess and neither is an advocate of these economy measures.

Finally it is worth observing that both grandmasters have expended a lot of nervous energy during this game, but Tal is in the more favourable position because he is attacking. Rudolf Spielmann has written instructively on this issue. As a rule, the attacker has well-placed pieces, he enjoys greater freedom of space, he can rapidly undermine strategic strong points and thus he is able to pursue a variety of secondary objectives, in addition to the ultimate aim.

The defender, on the other hand, has to try to understand his opponent's plans – often only by guessing. Under the most favourable circumstances he can spot a weakness in the enemy position and exploit it – but more usually his policies are dictated to him and he can only react. This task requires much more care and strength of will than the management of an attack; it is thus wearing, and more often leads to a decline in the powers of resistance – whether it be that one no longer finds the right answers to the problems or one just loses faith in the position.

I should like to say, in addition to these general observations, that Tal knows how to produce complex positions which will cost his opponent dearly in calculating time. It is no wonder that they get into the most serious time trouble and then do not always find the right moves. After Simagin's error, the distant passed pawn on the a-file ensures a quick victory for the Rigan grandmaster. **37 ♕xa7+ ♔g6 38 ♕a8 ♔f6 39 a4 ♔e5 40 a5 ♔d5 41 ♕d8+ ♔e4 42 a6 ♔f3 43 a7 ♖e2 44 ♕d3+ ♖2e3 45 ♕xe3+ Resigns**.

Threats from Beneath the Surface

Emanuel Lasker once wrote that during the course of the chess 'struggle', players do not always immediately hit upon the correct plan. However, it will benefit a player greatly to practise hard at deriving plans from examples of good practice.

Of course, it takes two players to make a plan complete. The difficulties and the fascination of chess alike, are ultimately to be found in an opponent's ceaseless struggle to counter our plans. The player who formulates his plan without giving sufficient consideration to his opponent's possibilities is building upon sand – as is the player who counts on his opponent making an error.

In the following game White succeeds in carrying out his plan, which is to keep the enemy king firmly in the centre. He achieves this by keeping up general threats, supported by other threats which lurk, so to speak, beneath a surface of thin ice. Black has to pay dearly for avoiding mate; he has to make a serious positional concession by consenting to a strongly placed knight on his d5 and to a passed pawn. It is worth noting that the attacker does not get too excited about the possible mate, when he can get other, no less valuable positional advantages. Flexible play – that is what it is all about!

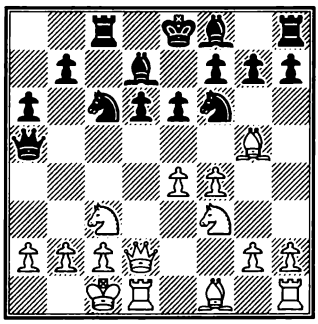
Game No. 15

Tal – Furman

Riga 1956

Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 d6 6 ♗g5 e6 7 ♕d2 a6 8 0-0-0 ♗d7 9 f4 ♖c8 10 ♘f3 ♕a5



FURMAN

Position after 10 ... ♕a5

TAL

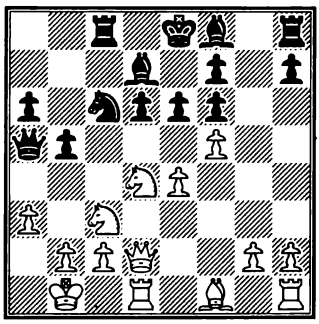
We have already met the basic idea of positions of this type in the commentary to the game Tal – Klaman; Black pins his hopes on a queenside attack, White upon a breakthrough in the centre. The two armies face each other with these ideas in mind.

11 ♔b1! A typical prophylactic move. He carefully protects the pawn at a2, which becomes the weakest point in White's camp after castling on the queenside. Is it not remarkable that Tal's temperament allows him to select this move, rather than to storm through with 11 e5 ?

Question 30 **What could Black have replied to this?**

11 ... b5

Black follows his attacking plan and thereby ignores the consequent weakness on his kingside. **12 ♗xf6 gxf6 13 f5** With this move White fixes the doubled pawns on f6 and f7 and creates something to attack (e6). **13 ... ♘b4** An instructive manoeuvre! If there is nothing to attack, then create something! Here Black provokes the pawn move which follows, so that it may be later attacked (b4) and after the exchange of the pawn (axb4) to get pressure on the b-file. **14 a3 ♘c6 15 ♘d4** The real intention of this move is not to increase the pressure on e6, but to swap off the dangerous black knight.

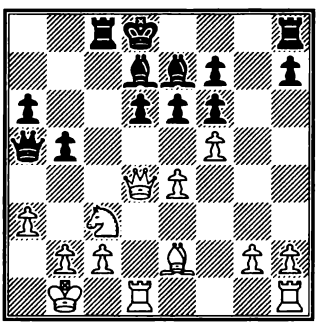


FURMAN

Position after 15 ♘d4

TAL

15 ... ♘xd4 Not quite accurate. Black should not have waited any longer with the advance of the knight's pawn. 15 ... b4! 16 ♘xc6 ♗xc6 17 axb4 ♕xb4 18 ♕d4! (the queen must be forced away from her strong position, or be exchanged) 18 ... ♖b8 19 b3 h5 20 ♕xb4 ♖xb4 with equal prospects. Thus, after 15 ... b4 Black could have obtained equality, but the text move is an unobtrusive error which significantly improves the position of his opponent's pieces. Yet such errors are often the ones which disturb the balance of a position. **16 ♕xd4** The queen feels just as much at home on d4 as did the knight! **16 ... ♗e7 17 ♗e2 ♔d8**



FURMAN

Position after 17 ... ♔d8

TAL

Black has to swallow this bitter pill because of the threat 18 ♗h5 followed by fxe6. Apparently Black had originally planned to castle, but after 17 ... 0-0 the ice suddenly breaks to reveal threats which were hitherto only dormant: 18 ♖d3! ♔h8 19 ♖h3 (notice the switch of the rook, in front of its own pawns – it is a typical attacking ploy!) 19 ... ♖g8 20 ♖h6 ♕d8 21 g4 followed by h4 with a strong initiative. What was Tal's next move?

* * * * * *

18 ♖hf1

Systematic play. The weakest point in the black camp is the pawn at f6 – it immediately comes under fire. **18 ... ♖b8?** A serious, if understandable mistake. Black sees the threat 19 fxe6 followed by ♖xf6 and wants to start active counterplay on the queenside – but, in doing this, he underestimates Tal's combinative skills. Much safer would have been 18 ... ♖f8. If the other possibility 18 ... ♖g8 had been played, Tal had opted for the following line 19 fxe6 fxe6 20 ♖xf6 ♖xg2 21 ♖f7 ♖xc3 22 ♖xe7 ♖c6.

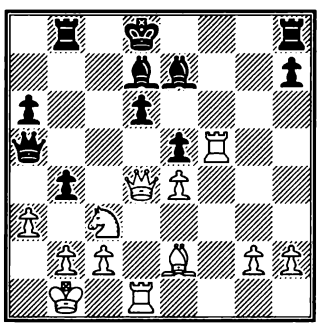
Question 31 **How do you think he then planned to answer 22 ... ♖c6 which appears to hold everything?**

19 fxe6 fxe6 20 ♖xf6 b4

This counterattack is forced. After 20 ... ♗xf6, the ice is broken again ...

Question 32 **But you will surely want to discover for yourself what happens if Black plays this move.**

21 ♖f5 e5



FURMAN

Position after 21 ... e5

TAL

Black had pinned his hopes on this move. Now there are no fewer than three white pieces threatened at the same time. How did Tal get out of this scrape?

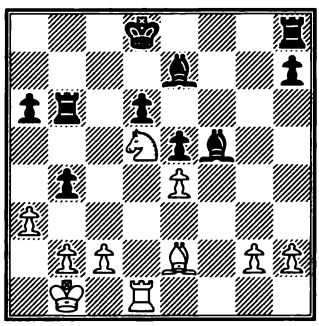
* * * * * *

22 ♕a7!

The unprotected rook at b8 enables White to gain a tempo with the queen. **22 ... ♕b6** The white queen is in too strong a position, but could Black not play 22 ... ♖c8 here?

Question 33 **What do you think?**

23 ♕xb6+ ♖xb6 24 ♘d5 ♗xf5



FURMAN

Position after 24 ... ♗xf5

TAL

* * * * * *

25 exf5!

The exchange sacrifice proves to be quickly decisive. Black has saved his king's scalp but, as previously mentioned in the introductory remarks to this game, White's positional advantage assures him of a fairly easy technical victory (the dominant knight on d5 and the strong passed pawn on f5). **25 ... ♖b8 26 f6 ♗f8** A tragi-comic position: all Black's pieces remain passive on his own back rank. **27 axb4 ♔d7 28 g4 ♖g8 29 h4 h6 30 ♖g1!** This creates two connected passed pawns, which guarantee the win. **30 ... e4 31 g5 hxg5 32 hxg5 ♔e6 33 ♗c4 ♔e5 34 g6 ♗h6 35 ♘e7 ♖gd8 36 g7 Resigns**.

Misjudging the Character of a Game

In the next game, White believed that after the exchange of queens the game would assume endgame characteristics. As is often the case in the endgame, the king supposed itself to be safe and remained confidently in the centre. Yet this supposition proved to be ill-founded; White had failed to appreciate that, in spite of the exchange of queens, there was still a complicated middlegame in progress.

Mukhin's decision to go in for simplifications against Tal was a bit of psychological warfare. The game was played in the last round of the Russian Chess Olympiad and every half point mattered to the Latvian team which Tal led – thus Mukhin decided to play for simplification. Of course, in this type of situation, the onus is on the grandmaster, as the stronger player, to try to disrupt the balance of the position at any price – if need be by violent means – and such violent means often transgress the inner logical principles of the position and consequently lead to poor results.

As we know, Tal in fact enjoys taking risks and tends towards hyper-complicated play, so perhaps this idea might have been successful, if Tal had not been told by his trainer in the pre-match talk, to play as solidly as possible and only as a last resort to go in for risks! 'I sat down at the board with this idea in mind. However, a chess player proposes, but the chessboard disposes ...' Tal wrote in *Shakhmaty,* in the foreword to the following game. Tal's notes give us a good view of a grandmaster's thought processes and we shall quote them frequently in what follows.

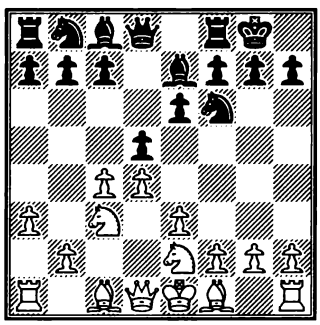
Game No. 16

Mukhin – Tal

Moscow 1972

Nimzo-Indian Defence

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e3 0-0 5 ♘ge2 White wants to avoid doubled pawns on the c-file – thus he chooses a somewhat laborious development and this allows Black to keep his king's bishop at the expense of a loss in tempo. **5 ... d5 6 a3 ♗e7**

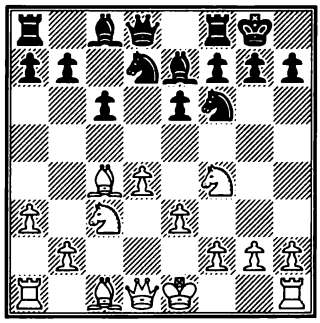


TAL

Position after 6 ... ♗e7

MUKHIN

7 ♘f4 'More usual is 7 cxd5, after which Black can choose between 7 ... ♘xd5 or 7 ... exd5. Theory gives preference to capturing with the knight, which equalizes easily enough. I prefer taking with the pawn, which leads to an exciting game. This happened in my game against L.Polugayevsky in the 15th Russian Championship and in numerous blitz games against A.Koblencs 7 cxd5 exd5 8 ♘f4 c6 9 ♗d3 a5 10 0-0 ♘a6 11 f3 ♘c7 12 ♖e1 c5 with a very unclear position' (Tal). By playing the text move, Mukhin avoids this complex variation, which he undoubtedly knew about. He intends to restrict complications. **7 ... c6 8 ♗d3 dxc4 9 ♗xc4 ♘bd7**



TAL

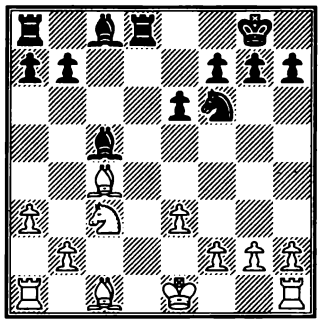
Position after 9 ... ♘bd7

MUKHIN

'A critical position. If Black can play e5, he gets at least equality. Yet after my ninth move, I was a bit afraid of 10 ♗xe6 fxe6 11 ♘xe6 ♕e8 12 ♘xf8 (much weaker would be 12 ♘c7 ♕g6 13 ♘xa8 ♕xg2) 12 ... ♘xf8 13 0-0 and the wide pawn front (d4 to h2) threatens to come into play.

'Of course, Black too has certain counter chances. However, White should have chosen this line, because it conforms to the positional requirements and to the 'spirit' of the position. Thus I was prepared to venture upon such a course of play, if only to provide myself with an alibi to satisfy my trainer, because the instigator of the assault would, of course, have been my opponent!' (Tal).

Mukhin, however, did not seem to want such a sharp course of play – he was still dominated by the idea that he had to restrict the grandmaster by playing quietly, which is more easily achieved with the white pieces. No doubt he hoped that sooner or later Tal would lose his nerve. Also, another reason for avoiding sharp lines would undoubtedly have been the respect he held for his great opponent. It can often be psychologically inhibiting, if we are challenged provocatively. **10 ♘d3** Preventing the freeing move ... e6-e5 (principle: restrict enemy freeing moves!) but Black now comes from the other side with the c-pawn. **10 ... c5 11 dxc5 ♘xc5 12 ♘xc5 ♗xc5 13 ♕xd8 ♖xd8**



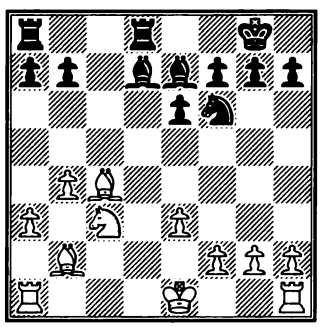
TAL

Position after 13 ... ♖xd8

MUKHIN

The game seems to be over before it has properly begun. However, in these seemingly simple positions, one has to guard against the tendency to concentrate solely upon equality. In every position, there are dynamic fluctuations – each move changes and disturbs the balance; both chess and psychological mistakes lead to new tensions. They exist in this position, too.

White weakens the important strategic points a4 and c4, as a result of his next pawn advance. The mistake is made because of White's desire to drive the bishop away with a gain of tempo, but such desires can easily lead to a narrow assessment of the position if one allows them to dominate one's thinking. **14 b4?** Better would have been 14 ♗d2. **14 ... ♗e7 15 ♗b2 ♗d7**



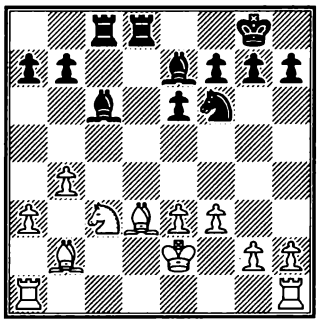
TAL

Position after 15 ... ♗d7

MUKHIN

16 ♔e2 Instinctive play by White – the king belongs in the centre in the endgame, doesn't it? Yet this routine move proves to be unsound in this instance; the king would have been safer castled on the short side.

16 ... ♖ac8 17 ♗d3 It was difficult to see that this move already signifies the beginning of the end. Clearly, 17 ♗b3 ought to have been played, in order to protect the white squares on the queenside. **17 ... ♗c6 18 f3**



TAL

Position after 18 f3

MUKHIN

Which set-up would you adopt, now?

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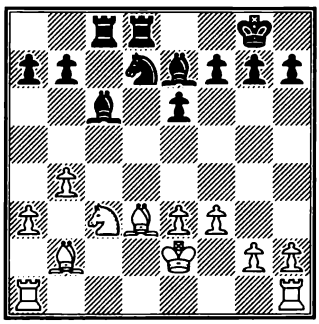
18 ... ♘d7!

From time to time the chess master has to check up on the positions of his pieces, so that he may decide where they can function more effectively. In the present instance the knight on f6 has no future – it does attack the square e4, but this is protected more than enough by the pawn on f3. The last move aims to transfer the knight to b6, from where it will control the weak points at a4 and c4. It is an innocuous piece movement which does not threaten anything specific – the knight is 'only' brought up to a square upon which its potential for activity is increased.

Yet, upon closer inspection, a strategy which creates the greatest possible activity for our pieces thereby produces the positional requirements for the sudden arrival of combinations. The art of an Alekhine or a Tal does not simply consist in the execution of wonderful sacrificial combinations but above all in their preparation. 'I can combine just as well as Alekhine,' Rudolf Spielmann was once heard to say, 'but I don't know how Alekhine gets the positions in which such combinations can take place!' To return to our game, I should like to reveal in anticipation that Tal's lovely final attack is ably supported by the knight on b6!



TAL

Position after 18 ... ♘d7!

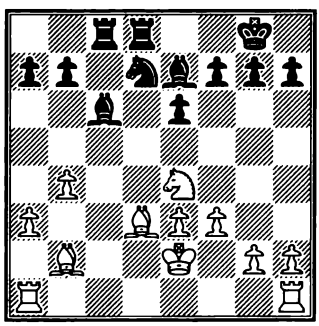
MUKHIN

19 ♘e4

What do you think about 19 b5?

* * * * * *

The following remark of Tal's shows that he is prepared if necessary to make do with the acquisition of positional advantages which simply increase the power of his pieces: '... the move 19 b5 is not dangerous, as Black gets a positional advantage after 19 ... ♘e5 20 bxc6 ♘xd3 21 cxb7 ♖b8. I intended to take up a strong position on c4 with the knight, because my opponent had weakened this square with his incautious 14th move' (Tal). *N.B.* The square upon which an opponent can settle down quite comfortably, without fear of being driven away, is a weak one.



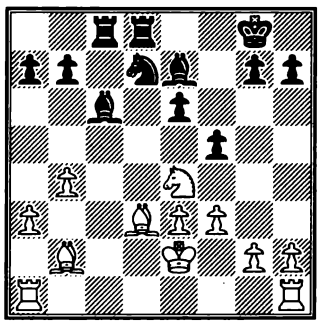
TAL

Position after 19 ♘e4

MUKHIN

19 ... f5 So many moves seem to give active play, but then it becomes apparent after the next few moves that the attacker has shot his bolt and the

simplified position is better for the defender – one must not be tempted by these 'pseudo'-active moves! Black could have chosen a pseudo-active variation here with 19 ... ♗b5 20 ♗xb5 ♖c2+ 21 ♘d2 ♖xb2 22 ♖ab1.



TAL

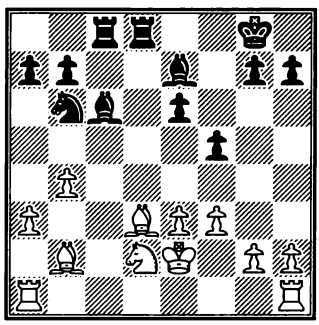
Analysis after 22 ♖ab1

MUKHIN

20 ♘d2 We have already seen Lasker's axiom that when attacking, one should look for the weakest link in the opponent's chain. Thus, correspondingly, when defending, one should quickly learn to recognise a relatively weak spot or a poorly placed piece in one's own position and, if need be, defend prophylactically.

With this axiom in mind, White would have done better to play 20 ♘f2, in order to defend the bishop on d3. By playing the text move, Mukhin wanted to strengthen the control of c4, because it had undoubtedly become obvious to him that this point was looking weak – probably he was already regretting that he had played 14 b4. Yet his d3 is even weaker than c4!

20 ... ♘b6



TAL

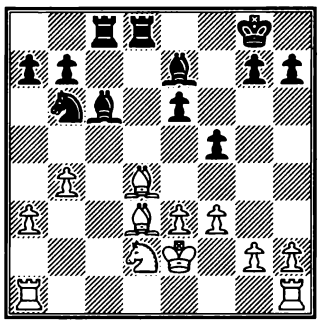
Position after 20 ... ♘b6

MUKHIN

21 ♗d4

Question 34 **Make an attempt to calculate the consequences of 21 b5. With the move in the game White tries to block the d-file.**

Take a good look at this position! It isn't clear how it has happened, but all Tal's pieces have taken up favourable positions! What miserable roles, on the other hand, are played by the two white rooks! Nevertheless, White's minor pieces seem to have gathered menacingly in the centre, but this agglomeration just turns out to be a giant with feet of clay! It is not surprising, given the different powers of the pieces, that there are combinative possibilities in the position. It is now your move.



TAL

Position after 21 ♗d4

MUKHIN

* * * * * *

21 ... e5! 22 ♗c5

If 22 ♗xb6 there follows 22 ... ♖xd3! But what happens after 22 ♗xe5 ? If you analyse this position, you will be really struck by the amazing hidden possibilities it contains.

* * * * * *

22 ♗xe5 ♖xd3 23 ♔xd3 ♗b5+ 24 ♔d4 ♘a4 (The mating net is cast! The knight manoeuvre has paid off handsomely) 25 ♔d5 (25 e4 loses material 25 ... ♖d8+ 26 ♔e3 ♖d3+ 27 ♔e2 ♖d5 discovered check with a double attack!); Tal had calculated up to this point and here is what he had to comment, 'I felt intuitively that the king had to be mated, but further specific calculation was made difficult because there were so many tempting possibilities. So I thought it more practical not to delve any deeper into the position, but to wait until I had more time in which to

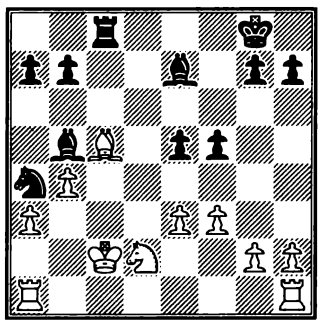
formulate a conclusive solution – and indeed, during the evening, after the game, this was discovered by analysis'.

Question 35 **Can you work it out?**

22 ... ♖xd3

A 'magnetic' combination – the king is drawn, as if by a magnet, into the danger zone. **23 ♔xd3 ♗b5+ 24 ♔c2 ♘a4**

The knight ties up the mating net, so to speak.



TAL

Position after 24 ... ♘a4

MUKHIN

25 ♔b3

'If 25 ♔d1, I would have played 25 ... ♗f6 26 e4 (only in this way can the bishop be saved) 26 ... b6 27 ♗e3 (27 ♗f2 ♗g5) 27 ... ♖c3 and the knight on a4 invades decisively with check on b2. After 25 ♔b1 I would have continued as in the game' (Tal). Now, it is your turn again. What was Tal's next move?

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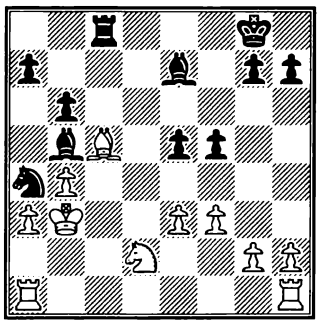
25 ... b6!



TAL

Position after 25 ... b6

MUKHIN

26 ♘c4

> ***Question 36*** **What would have happened after 26 ♗xe7 in this case and also in a similar situation if White had earlier played 25 ♔b1 b6! 26 ♗xe7 ?**

26 ... bxc5 27 ♘xe5 cxb4 28 ♖ac1 ♘c5+ 29 ♔xb4 a6! A precise finish. **White resigned** on account of the numerous threats.

Transgressing an Opening Principle?

You must have been convinced, from the games discussed so far, of the catastrophic consequences which can follow as a result of an exposed weak king position. Throughout, Tal has demonstrated in his own ingenious way, how to capitalise upon these situations and turn them to advantage – if need be by sacrificing heavily. He has shrewdly castled at the appropriate moment and then attacked with combined forces.

In the next game we shall witness a remarkable event: Tal deliberately renounces the right to castle, moves his king to d1 and is completely unruffled when his king ventures into the 'lion's den' – he thus goes against the very logic which he has shown so convincingly up to now. In order to understand the deeper rationale for this idea, which initially seems to be almost crazy, we must briefly look at an historical parallel.

Wilhelm Steinitz was the founder of modern chess theory. He was the first to take a critical look at the play of the old masters, and as a result of this, he stated that their attacks were only successful because of poor defence. Instead of the motto 'attack at any price', Steinitz proposed the concept that an attack is only justified if certain positional advantages have previously been attained (compare this with the remarks made about the game Tal – Donner).

He was the first to point towards the importance of systematic play which, however, has to be based upon an assessment of the position. 'The assessment of the position,' wrote Alexander Kotov, 'is the most important ingredient in the lessons of the first world champion. The creative process of assessment resembles that of the chemical analysis of matter. Like Mendeleyev in the field of chemistry, Steinitz produced for chess his own list of "positional elements" which impose their own peculiar mark upon every position. When a chess player is assessing a position, he must above all isolate the elements, as a chemist does, in order to establish the individual characteristic of the position. From this information, he then draws a conclusion and tries to formulate an appropriate plan.'

Steinitz pinpointed the following positional elements which could be crystallised into advantages in the game and upon which we could base our assessments of a position:

(1) Lead in development in the opening.

(2) Control of the centre.

(3) Greater mobility of pieces.

(4) Exposed or weakened position of the opposing king.

(5) Major piece control of open files; domination of diagonals by the bishops.

(6) Advantage of the pair of bishops over bishop and knight or two knights.

(7) Weak points or complexes of weak squares in the enemy camp.

(8) Better pawn formation.

(9) Pawn majority on the queenside.

Steinitz' theory was an epoch-making discovery and formed the cornerstone of modern chess. Initially, Steinitz tended to preach of his discoveries as being 'incontrovertible rules'. He defended his theory with the single-mindedness typical of a pioneer, and did not mind that for the most part he was involved in dogmatic pedantry.

The antidote to Steinitz was the Russian master Mikhail Chigorin. Far be it from Chigorin to ignore theoretical knowledge, but on the other hand he maintained that the creative thought processes of the chess player do not lend themselves to representation by 'eternal', constant formulae. Principles and rules should not be laid down dogmatically, but used creatively, in harmony with the specific requirements of a position.

Now how are the 'specific requirements of a position' to be interpreted? We need consider not only the static, individual characteristics of the position but also its dynamic properties. By doing this, we concede certain advantages to our opponent in return for neutralizing chances of our own. Thus if we ignore certain positional requirements, we have to get some other kind of compensation.

If we take a closer look then, the concessions that we make to our opponent when we assess these 'specific requirements of a position' by no means constitute a refutation of Steinitz' theory. When there is such a clash of different ideas about the game, the powerful dynamics, the razor-sharp tactics, play an important, if not the most important role and consequently it is not always so easy to establish whose positional concessions weigh the heavier.

The application of this type of method, which is typical of the Soviet School of Chess, demands the following prerequisites:

(1) deep understanding of the nuances in a position;

(2) exact knowledge and deep comprehension of all positional principles – for as we have already seen, just because we have to make concrete evaluations of certain positional elements, this in no way implies a rejection of all principles;

(3) an ability to calculate variations exactly and quickly, plus clear conceptual powers;

(4) inventiveness and enjoyment of risk-taking.

We shall now look at the next game, with this knowledge in mind.

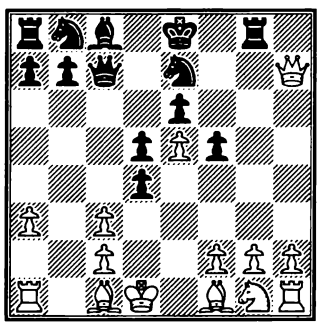
Game No. 17

Tal – Botvinnik

Game 1, World Championship match, Moscow 1960

French Defence

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 ♗xc3+ 6 bxc3 ♕c7 7 ♕g4 f5 8 ♕g3 ♘e7 9 ♕xg7 ♖g8 10 ♕xh7 cxd4 11 ♔d1?!



BOTVINNIK

Position after 11 ♔d1!?

TAL

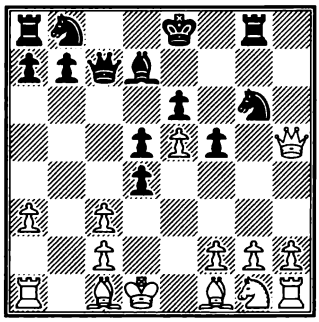
Twenty years ago, a move like this would have made everyone's hair stand on end in horror! Yet this paradoxical move should in no way be looked upon simply as a cheeky snub of the most elementary opening principles – it has a lot in its favour:

(1) the threat 11 ... ♕xc3+ is evaded;

(2) it allows White to choose whether to develop the knight on e2 or f3 and thus it does not yet reveal his future plans;

(3) because Black is so badly developed and his king stands precariously placed on its own square, it becomes possible for White to make an unimpeded assault on f7.

11 ... ♗d7 By playing this crafty move, Black emphasises the flaw in White's position, which is the king's position on d1. The move pursues the strategic aim of preparing to castle long, and yet it also conceals some tactical threats. After the 'normal' developing move 12 ♘f3, then 12 ... ♗a4 13 ♗d3 ♕xc3 could give Black threats which are difficult to meet. If 12 ♘e2, then 12 ... ♗a4 threatens 13 ... d3. Thus White must play energetically and give Black some counter threats to worry about. White has a definite trump card in the weakened diagonal h5-e8 and he immediately fixes his attention on this. **12 ♕h5+** Tal thought about this move for 17 minutes. **12 ... ♘g6**



BOTVINNIK

Position after 12 ... ♘g6

TAL

Botvinnik's answer came after 4 minutes. If 12 ... ♔d8, White would have continued the attack with 13 ♗g5. **13 ♘e2** Tal took 31 minutes over this move! Let us hear what he had to say later. What was he thinking about? 'Black's 12th move puts the ball in White's court. Should he content himself with a draw by repeating the position, 13 ♕h7 ♘e7 14 ♕h5+ ? This would clearly be tantamount to admitting that there was nothing left in the position. My move aimed at tying down the black knight. Firstly, it threatens 14 ♘f4 and, if 14 ... ♔f7, then the quiet 15 ♗d3 or the sharp 15 g4. In short, Black has to look after his king.

'Botvinnik thought over his next move for 30 minutes. I concluded that this was not pre-match analysis. There was no joy for him after 13 ... ♕xe5 14 cxd4 or after 13 ... dxc3 14 ♘f4 ♔f7 15 ♗d3.

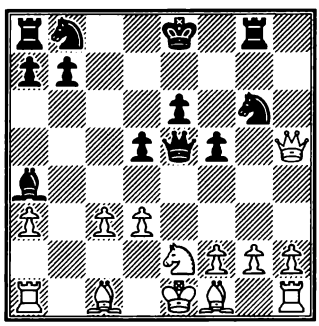
Question 37 **In this latter variation can you see a neat combination after 15 ... ♘c6?**

The direct attack 13 ... ♗a4 would be refuted by the following counterattack, 14 ♘f4 ♕xc3 15 ♗d3 ♕xa1 16 ♘xg6 ♘c6 17 ♘f4+! (This move is stronger than the one originally planned during the game, 17 ♘e7+ ♔d7! 18 ♘xg8 ♖xg8 with a double-edged game.) Nor are the defensive problems solved by 13 ... ♘c6 14 cxd4 ♖c8 15 ♖a2.'

* * * * * *

13 ... d3!

Botvinnik chooses the best move – with this novel pawn sacrifice, he breaks up the protective wall around the white king. The game now takes on gambit characteristics. **14 cxd3 ♗a4+** It is quite rare for such a 'natural' move to prove to be mistaken. Black tries to establish contact with his kingside with a gain of tempo, but in doing so he drives the white king to e1, where it is better placed. According to Tal 14 ... ♘c6 followed by 0-0-0 should have been played, after which Black would have adequate compensation for his two pawns. **15 ♔e1 ♕xe5**



BOTVINNIK

Position after 15 ... ♕xe5

TAL

Here we have an interesting example of an obsessive, but mistaken conception. The person who sacrifices often tries hard to regain the material quickly, in case he is unable to get an immediate decisive advantage – yet here it takes time to recover the goods. It would have been better to prepare to castle long by playing 15 ... ♘c6, to which Tal would have replied 16 f4 0-0-0 17 ♗d2.

Now you have to find Tal's next move!

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16 ♗g5!

Tal needed 18 minutes to find it. How many did you? Once more we meet our old friend the trouble-maker – this time in a new guise. Its main task again is to keep the king in the centre. In this respect the capture of the pawn on e5 turns out to be in White's favour, because the king's file may now be used to pose dangerous threats. **16 ... ♘c6 17 d4 ♕c7**

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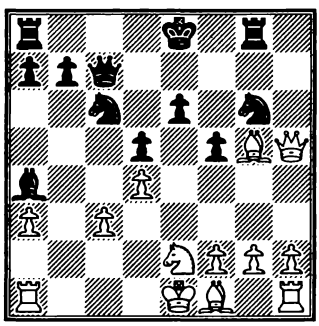


BOTVINNIK

Position after 17 ... ♕c7

TAL

18 h4!

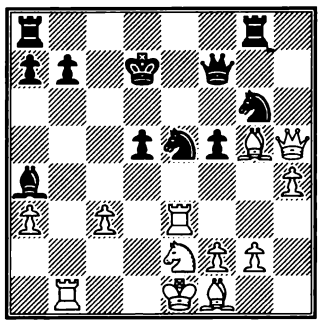
Quite unexpected! This is not so much to advance the passed pawn, but more to bring the rook into battle via h3-e3. **18 ... e5** If 18 ... ♘ce7 there follows the quite prosaic 19 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 20 ♕g5 (Tal). **19 ♖h3 ♕f7** After 19 ... e4 Black's position would indeed be consolidated, but White could proceed unhampered with the advance of his passed pawn. The text move is designed to drive away the white queen from her strong position, by playing ... ♖h8, but nothing comes of it! **20 dxe5 ♘cxe5**

Question 38 **Why not 20 ... ♖h8 ?**

21 ♖e3 ♔d7

Question 39 **Now, why not 21 ... ♖h8 at last?**

22 ♖b1



BOTVINNIK

Position after 22 ♖b1

TAL

22 ... b6

Chess is really unfathomable. Botvinnik can hardly be blamed for failing to recognise that the weakness at a6 could be important, with the white queen standing at h5 (see comment on move 23!). Let us again see what Tal has to say: '22 ... ♗c6 would have led to complications. I had intended to sacrifice the exchange if that had been played, 23 ♘d4 f4 24 ♖xe5! ♘xe5 25 ♕xf7+ ♘xf7 26 ♗xf4 ♖ae8+ 27 ♔d2, but that would have been the lesser evil for Black.' The move 22 ... b6 has yet another drawback – the unprotected bishop on a4 allows White to bring his rook into play with a gain of tempo. **23 ♘f4** If now 23 ... ♖h8, then 24 ♘xg6 ♘xg6 25 ♕e2 with the decisive threat 26 ♕a6! **23 ... ♖ae8**

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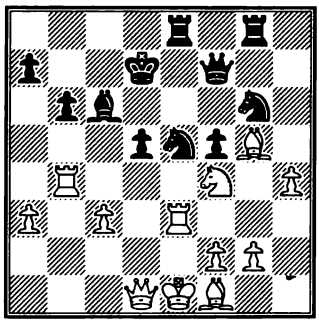
24 ♖b4 ♗c6 25 ♕d1!

The queen has done her duty on the kingside, now she leaves to put pressure on the centre.

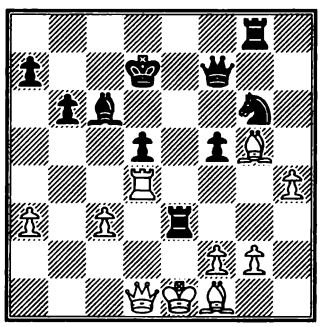


BOTVINNIK

Position after 25 ♕d1!

TAL

A novel middlegame position! Queen and king are once more happily joined on their own squares and the dormant king's bishop has yet to make a move! Yet Black's position is critical – apart from the fact that White is a pawn up, it is clear also that his rooks are really active. **25 ... ♘xf4** At this stage, Black had only 25 minutes left before the time control, whereas Tal still had 1 hour 8 minutes at his disposal. Defence has taken more time than attack – a well-known phenomenon. **26 ♖xf4 ♘g6 27 ♖d4 ♖xe3+**



BOTVINNIK

Position after 27 ... ♖xe3+

TAL

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28 fxe3!

The pawn on e3 will offer protection to the white king. Moreover, White did not want to give up the strong position of his bishop on g5 so easily. **28 ... ♔c7**

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29 c4

The pawn hits at the key square d5 with great effect! **29 ... dxc4** Desperation – but d5 could not be held, 29 ... ♘e7 30 cxd5 ♗xd5 (if 30 ... ♘xd5 there follows the pin 31 ♗c4) 31 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 32 ♕c1+! (Tal) [but 32 ... ♗c6! 33 ♗b5 ♕c5! – *Ed.*] **30 ♗xc4 ♕g7 31 ♗xg8 ♕xg8 32 h5 Resigns**.

Thus the passed pawn has finally dealt the death blow. It was a highly complicated struggle!

Castling on Opposite Sides

The pawn storm is a characteristic attacking strategy of games in which the kings are castled on opposite sides of the board – the pawns in this instance do not protect their king and can storm forward boldly, in the vanguard of the attack. They seek contact with the opposing pawn phalanx in order to weaken it and pave the way for the attacking pieces – open files for the rooks, diagonals for the far-reaching bishops.

As this procedure is logical for both sides, the main idea after castling on opposite sides is to take the initiative quickly and to be first to get in the decisive blows. The most typical forms of attack may be written systematically, as follows:

(1) If the opponent's bishop is fianchettoed, the three-cornered pawn complex consists of f7, g6 and h7. This is typical of the King's Indian Defence or the Dragon Variation of the Sicilian Game. By means of h4, h5 White can attack the advanced pawn on g6, the so-called 'target', after which the exchange of pawns hxg6 leads to the opening of an important line of attack. Of course, this strategy involves the attacker bringing up a sufficient number of reinforcements to increase the attacking potential. It is an advantage to swap off the fianchettoed bishop, after which the squares around the king become weak (see the following game, Tal – Tolush).

(2) If there is no such target in the form of pawns at f7, g6 and h7, then one must be created and here again the pawns carry out the preparatory work; they stalk up to the castle fortress and create a target (after a pawn sacrifice on g6), which is then followed up by h4, h5 and leads to the opening of the h-file (see Game No. 20, Tal – Koblencs). This is analogous to the opening of the a-file (see Game No. 21, Honfi – Tal). A target can also simply be forced by threatening piece placement, as we have already seen in Game No. 15, Tal – Furman – in that game the advance ... b5, b4 was possible after a3 had been forced.

(3) The attack can simply be conducted by pieces, without assistance from the pawns (see Game No. 24, Tal – Smyslov).

The Elements of an Attacking Game

The next game clearly illustrates the relationship between the basic idea (also termed basic aim by Max Euwe), the strategy and the tactics. You will be already aware by now that the basic idea, which takes shape in the opening, provides us with the guidelines for our strategic plan. In the games previously discussed the basic idea consisted in preventing the opponent from castling and then quickly exploiting his exposed position. The aggressor was clearly looking out for effective attacking positions and strove for an active piece set-up. Of course, the defender also had his basic idea – namely, to get his king into safety, but usually the attacker's initiative was so forceful and set the pattern to such an extent that the defender was not able to carry out his ideas.

The chess struggle is not always as stormy as this. Often the ultimate aim, which is the conquest of the enemy king, is achieved only after the completion of a strategic plan consisting of a series of constant tactical clashes. Naturally, during the course of such a prolonged concentrated attack, nothing may be left to chance because one's opponent wants to strike out as well; he will expend his energy upon frustrating enemy plans or starting counterattacks. This interplay of attack, parry and counterattack

heightens the drama of the battle and captivates not only the players, but also the onlookers and in our case, I trust, the readers, when the games are played through carefully.

It is worth noting that the following game was played in the last round of the 24th Russian Championship and only the winner had a chance of taking the title.

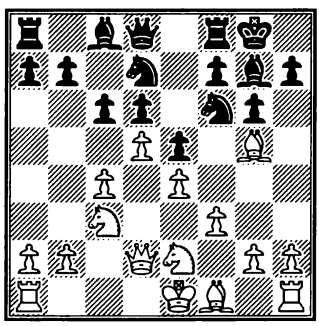
Game No. 18

Tal – Tolush

USSR Championship, Moscow 1957

King's Indian Defence

1 c4 ♘f6 2 ♘c3 g6 3 e4 d6 4 d4 ♗g7 5 f3 e5 6 ♘ge2 ♘bd7 7 ♗g5 c6 8 ♕d2 0-0 9 d5



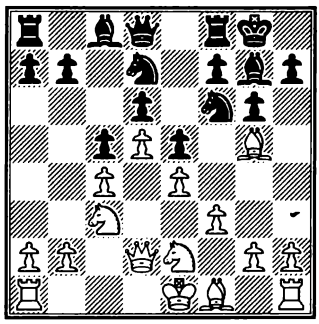
TOLUSH

Position after 9 d5

TAL

White closes the centre for two reasons: firstly, he gets a certain spatial advantage and secondly he decreases the effectiveness of the black king's bishop, which is now hindered in its freedom of action by its own pawn on e5 and is thus condemned to being a 'bad' bishop.

The position has now assumed its typical character, with the tip of the pawn centre on d5, and from the individual characteristics of this centre we are able to understand the basic idea of the position itself. As there is no fear of counterattack or breakthrough in the centre in such positions, the strategic focal point consequently shifts to the flank. In its early stages, this plan emerges in a somewhat nebulous, general form in the minds of the combatants, but after a few more moves it becomes clearer and more sharply defined. **9 ... c5**

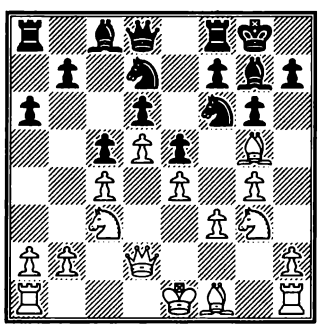


TOLUSH

Position after 9 ... c5

TAL

Black closes the centre completely. This move, which gives a very detailed shape to the future events, may be criticised as follows: Black must have calculated that White would castle long and begin storming operations on the kingside, thus he ought to have played 9 ... ♘b6; after castling on the queenside White would then have had to meet ... c6 and ... cxd5, followed by counterplay on the c-file. However, in view of further developments in the game, such criticism fails to take into account that the move 9 ... c5 has its own strategic logic. This pawn blockades the white pawn on c4 and thus makes it into a target and the b-file may be opened after ... a6 and ... b5, then counterplay against the expected long castling may be obtained. Admittedly, this plan does not fully work out, because of Tal's excellent parry on his 17th move – but one can hardly blame Tolush for failing to see that move at this stage. **10 g4 a6 11 ♘g3**



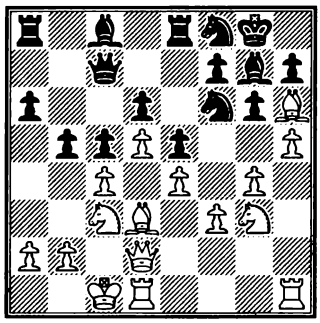
TOLUSH

Position after 11 ♘g3

TAL

11 ... ♖e8 A prophylactic measure, taken in order to answer ♗h6 with ♗h8. Black sees through White's strategic plan, mentioned in the preamble, of opening the h-file by h4-h5 and exchanging the bishop by ♗h6 ♗xg7. Yet is it not illogical to exchange bishops, after our early remarks about the 9th move making it a 'bad' black bishop? Why should

the opponent be freed of his bad bishop? Well, the bishop on g7 fulfils an important defensive function; it guards the black squares on the kingside, which would become weak and vulnerable after an exchange. The move 11 ... ♖e8 is also useful in other respects: it frees the square f8 for the queen's knight which, if need be, may protect the invasion square h7. **12 h4 ♕a5** This proves to be a loss of time. Better would have been the immediate 12 ... ♘f8 followed by 13 ... ♗d7. **13 ♗h6 ♘f8 14 h5 ♕c7 15 ♗d3 b5 16 0-0-0**



TOLUSH

Position after 16 0-0-0

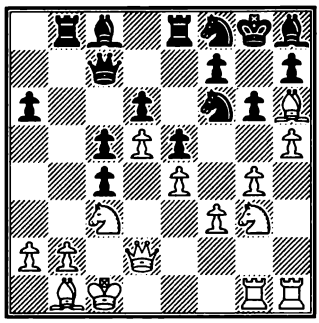
TAL

An exciting situation. Both players have steadfastly carried out their strategic plans and have created favourable conditions for tactics. Now it is a question of whose threats turn out to be the more dangerous – for whoever gets the initiative will be able to dictate the tempo. Thus, after the strategic operations, the tactics now decide. White declines the pawn sacrifice, because after 16 cxb5 axb5 17 ♗xb5 ♕b6 followed by ... ♗a6, Black gets enough counterplay on the two open files. Yet what is even more important, by accepting the pawn the focal point would be shifted to the queenside and White would be diverted from his attack.

16 ... bxc4 17 ♗b1! In my book *Chess Tactics,* I wrote the following, about this position: 'White has followed the correct attacking principles, yet that does not guarantee victory and from now on White has to play energetically and ingeniously. Former World Champion Max Euwe's comments are appropriate here – he said that great chess is above all about creative inspiration and may not be reduced to a formal application of principles.'

White's last move may be interpreted like that. On the one hand, chess is dominated by material principles, and accordingly White may not take the loss of a pawn lightly. On the other, after 17 ♗xb5 ♗d7 followed by ... ♗b5, the full power of Black's queen bishop would be felt (the

exchange on b5 would lead to the opening of the rook file). After the text move, the diagonal a6-f1 is closed to Black. White also has to consider the open b-file. In such situations, it is necessary to judge which is the greater advantage. Sometimes it is easy to judge, often the difference is a microscopic one and more often than not one plunges headlong into a vast sea of complex variations and relies mainly on intuition. **17 ... ♗h8** Now he wants to keep his bishop! **18 ♖dg1** The rook goes into ambush. **18 ... ♖b8**

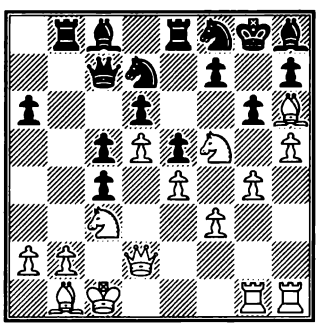


TOLUSH

Position after 18 ... ♖b8

TAL

19 ♘f5 A standard move, which is also played in the Ruy Lopez. If Black accepts the offer, the g-file is opened with devastating power. We have already seen the combination of the hidden rook and the sacrificial knight (The Rook in Ambush), when the rook stood on e1 and the knight was sacrificed on d5. **19 ... ♘6d7**



TOLUSH

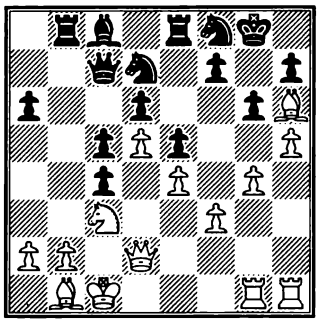
Position after 19 ... ♘6d7

TAL

Up to now you have been allowed to follow the events undisturbed. Now, however, it is time to work again and discover, along with Tal, how White should best continue his spoiling tactics. **20 ♗g5!** This emphasises the dangerous position of the white knight. Now the threat is 21 ♘e7+ ♔g7 22 h6 mate. If 20 ... f6 then 21 hxg6! hxg6 23 ♕h2 etc. could follow;

or here 21 ... fxg5 22 ♕xg5 with a highly dangerous white attack. Moreover, 21 ♘h6+ is also very embarrassing, thus Black's reply is strategically forced. **20 ... ♗g7 21 ♘xg7 ♔xg7**

Now we get to the crux of the issue. The tactical threats 'merely' aimed at removing the vital defensive piece. The black squares on the kingside are now seriously weakened – an important requirement for the success of the later attack on the king. **22 ♗h6+ ♔g8** Again, it is your turn to find the next move.



TOLUSH

Position after 22 ... ♔g8

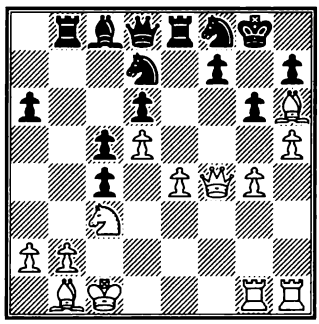
TAL

23 f4!!

Moves like this should not be passed over or underestimated, as they give new life to the battle. Therefore I award two exclamation marks to this move on account of its didactic value. White has been building up his position for a kingside attack and now it is important to strengthen this formation by bringing up reinforcements. At the critical position after move 22, the attack seemed to have come to a dead stop and threatened to make no further headway, as the bishop on b1 and the knight on c3 are hindered by their own pawn chain from active manoeuvres.

By playing the text move, White succeeds in reviving his attack. The threatened cramping move f4-f5 forces Black to take on f4, after which he will have to meet a possible e4-e5, which not only increases the intensity of the white bishop's attack on g6, but also vacates the square e4 for his knight. Besides this, the pressure down the f-file cannot be underestimated – one really cannot expect much more from a single move! The only drawback to 23 f4!! consists in the fact that the square e5 can be occupied by his opponent. As you will no doubt see, this is practically no use to Black.

23 ... exf4 24 ♕xf4 ♕d8



TOLUSH

Position after 24 ... ♕d8

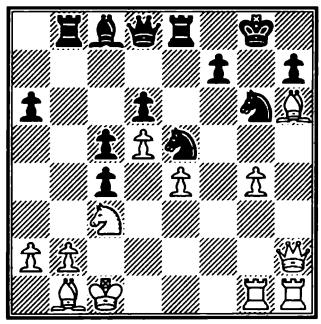
TAL

If 24 ... ♘e5 were possible, then White's dream of reviving the position would be ended, as the way to the kingside would remain blocked to the minor pieces. 24 ... ♘e5 is not playable because of 25 ♕f6 – here we see the consequences of weakening the black squares after the disappearance of the fianchettoed bishop.

25 hxg6 It is high time that the h-file was opened and this move gives Tolush a complex defensive problem. From three possible ways of taking the pawn, Black has to decide upon one! An instructive attacking mistake would have been 25 ♕xd6, because of 25 ... ♖b6 26 ♕f4 ♘e5! with a tenable position – compared to the actual continuation of the game, Black would have seen this as his dream come true! 25 ♕xd6 ♖b6 26 ♕h2? would have been a dreadful mistake as Black could reply 26 ... g5! and all the trouble which White had taken to open the rook file would come to nothing. **25 ... ♘xg6**

Question 40 **Which variations can you work out after 25 ... fxg6, and 25 ... hxg6 ?**

26 ♕h2 Again, 26 ♕xd6 would be a mistake because of 26 ... ♘ge5 and the threat of ... ♖b6 would be very unpleasant. **26 ... ♘de5**

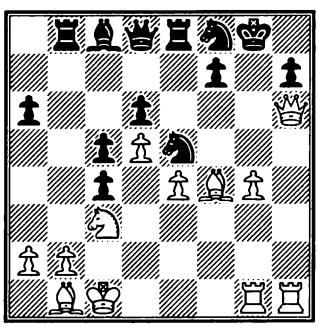


TOLUSH

Position after 26 ... ♘de5

TAL

27 ♗f4? Under no circumstances should White exchange his bishop. The mistake sprang from the understandable wish to kill two birds with one stone; White wanted to keep his eye on h7 and to attack the knight on e5. After 27 ♗e3 ♘f8 28 ♕h6 ♘5g6 29 ♗g5 Black would quickly lose because of the weak black squares. **27 ... ♘f8?** A psychologically interesting mistake. In the heat of battle, the chess player often reacts instinctively when a visible threat to his king emerges. This instinctive reaction is caused by a sense of self-preservation, because the loss of the king, of course, means the loss of the game. Here, this mistaken reaction was also undoubtedly caused by shortage of time – one reacts immediately to clear threats, without wasting a second! One wants to store up minutes in reserve for more difficult decisions during the imminent time trouble! Black clearly ought to have got rid of his arch enemy, the black-squared bishop 27 ... ♘xf4 28 ♕xf4 and it is difficult to storm Black's fortress. The knight would stand rock-like on e5, and this would be a prime example of a strong piece, which can only be removed with great difficulty. Also after 28 ♕xh7+, which Tolush probably feared, it would be hard for White to attack the black king (e.g. 28 ... ♔f8 29 ♕h6+ ♔e7! etc.). **28 ♕h6**



TOLUSH

Position after 28 ♕h6

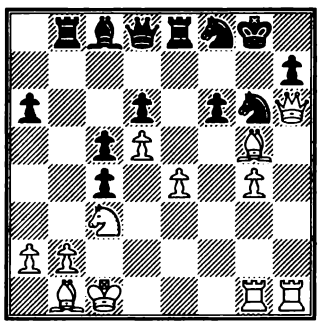
TAL

28 ... ♘eg6 When attacking, one must never lose sight of one's opponent's counter chances. Here White's attack broke through because Black was restricted and could not get his attack going. Can you work out why Black did not play 28 ... ♕b6?

* * * * * *

There would follow 28 ... ♕b6 29 ♘a4 ♕a5 30 ♗g5 (with the terrible threat of ♗f6) 30 ... ♘ed7 31 e5 and White's attack must prevail.

29 ♗g5 f6



TOLUSH

Position after 29 ... f6

TAL

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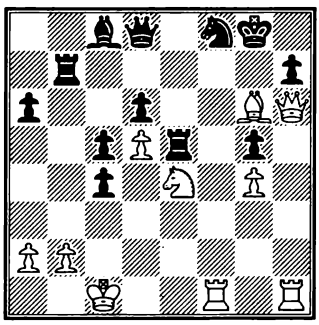
30 e5!!

Another Tal move requiring two exclamation marks! One blow suffices to free the diagonal for the bishop on b1 and to vacate e4 for the knight! The invasion of reinforcements now lends the decisive penetrative power to the attack. **30 ... ♖xe5**

Question 41 **Which tactical twist did White have in hand after 30 ... fxg5 ?**

31 ♗xg6 ♖b7 A typical defensive ploy – the queen's rook defends along the second rank from a distance. If 31 ... hxg6 there follows the previously mentioned variation, which I trust you found. If 31 ... ♖xg5 then 32 ♗xh7+ ♔f7 33 ♘e4! with a decisive attack. **32 ♘e4! fxg5 33 ♖f1**



TOLUSH

Position after 33 ♖f1

TAL

33 ... ♖xe4 Only by sacrificing the exchange can the threat of 34 ♘f6+ be averted. **34 ♗xe4 ♖g7 35 ♖f6 ♗xg4 36 ♖hf1** White shifts the focus to the f-file – the h-file has fulfilled its task! **36 ... ♘d7 37 ♖xd6 ♕e7 38 ♖xa6** This not only wins a pawn, but also underlines the weakness of the back rank. **38 ... ♔h8 39 ♗xh7! ♘b8 40 ♗f5+ ♔g8 41 ♗e6+ ♗xe6 42 ♖xe6 Resigns**.

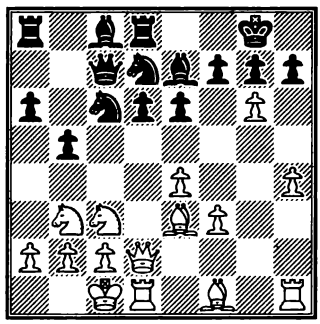
A particularly interesting and instructive game.

Three Eggs in One Basket

However, where should the pawns launch their storming attack if there is no target – for example, if the opposing pawns are on f7, g7 and h7?

In preparation, the 'storming' pawns are marched up to g5 and h4. Now the g-pawn engages on a bayonet charge right into the heart of the opposing pawn phalanx and thereby produces the desired disruption in the enemy camp. Black can choose from three continuations after g5-g6, he can take with either the f-pawn or the h-pawn or ignore the sacrifice

completely. Tal is, I suppose, the only grandmaster in modern chess history, who has had to respond to all three defensive possibilities and fortunately he has brought to the chess world the following lovely threesome.



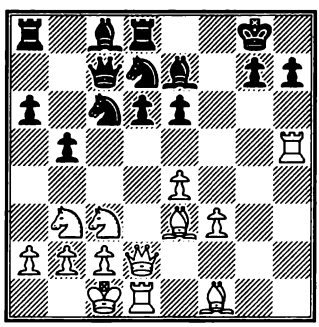
This middlegame position comes from the Sicilian Defence, after the moves: **1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 d6 6 ♗g5 e6 7 ♕d2 ♗e7 8 0-0-0 0-0 9 ♘b3 ♕b6 10 f3 a6 11 g4 ♖d8 12 ♗e3 ♕c7 13 g5 ♘d7 14 h4 b5 15 g6!**

Game No. 19

Tal – Mohrlok

Chess Olympiad, Varna 1962

15 ... fxg6 16 h5 gxh5 17 ♖xh5



MOHRLOK

Position after 17 ♖xh5

TAL

White has achieved his strategical aim; the rook has been made active, and the dangers of his immediate threats are shown if Black plays 17 ... b4?

Question 42 **Find the winning line.**

17 ... ♘f6

* * * * * *

18 ♖g5!

White does not commit the usual psychological mistake of sticking obstinately to the exploitation of the h-file. He recognises the specific requirements of the position and switches the focus of the attack to the g-file. **18 ... ♘e5** With the idea of taking up a strong position on c4. The knight on c4 would be so dominant that White would be practically forced to exchange it, after which Black would have the open b-file and be hoping for a counterattack. **19 ♕g2 ♗f8 20 ♗e2** This quiet move looks like a loss of tempo. **20 ... ♘c4 21 ♗xc4 bxc4 22 ♘d4 ♖b8**

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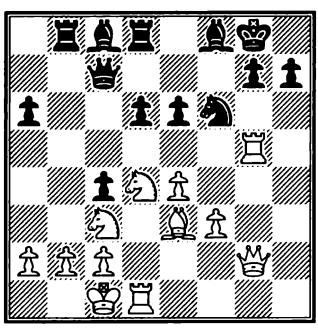


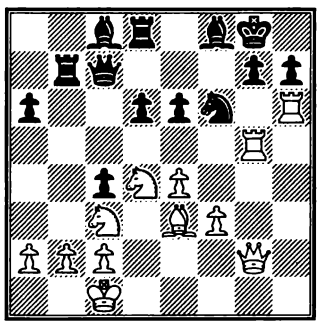
MOHRLOK

Position after 22 ... ♖b8

TAL

23 ♖h1!

An extraordinarily finely concealed move. White wants to tempt out the black king to f7 by the threat ♖h6! **23 ... ♖b7 24 ♖h6!**



MOHRLOK

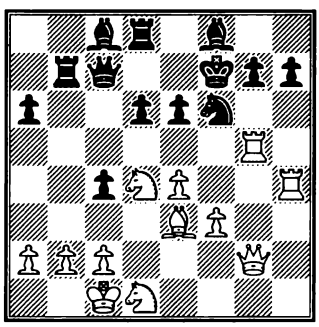
Position after 24 ♖h6!

TAL

24 ... ♔f7

Question 43 **You can amuse yourself by looking at the interesting variation after 24 ... g6. Just work out the main ideas.**

25 ♖h4 ♕b6 Black had renounced 23 ... ♕f7, so that he could have this counterattack at his disposal. After 25 ... ♔g8 White would have played 26 ♖f4!. **26 ♘d1 ♕c7**



MOHRLOK

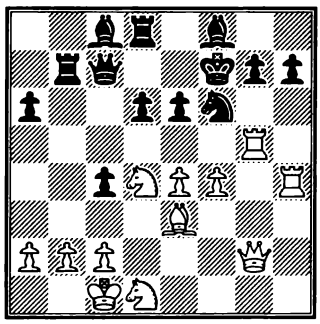
Position after 26 ... ♕c7

TAL

Black has to meet the threat 27 ♘xe6 – his counter threat has proved to be ineffective. Now there follows a real grandmaster move. Your turn please!

* * * * * *

27 f4!



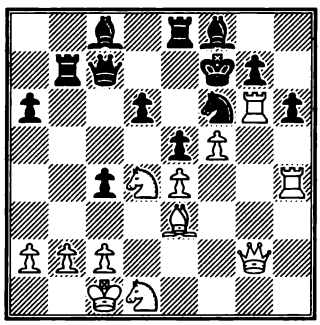
MOHRLOK

Position after 27 f4!

TAL

Perhaps you were looking for a fantastic sacrifice? Far from it! This prosaic move threatens first of all e4-e5 with the capture of the h-pawn. If Black counters this move with h6, the essential point of the move f4 is now shown – there is a hole on g6 into which the rook can nestle undisturbed, and this will become a positional element in the counterattack. The procedure is typical – just watch!

27 ... h6 The alternative 27 ... e5 would also have led to a weakness after 28 ♘f5 ♗xf5 (this most troublesome knight has to go) 29 ♖xf5. **28 ♖g6 ♖e8 29 f5!** White wants to gain the square d5 for his knight! **29 ... e5**



MOHRLOK

Position after 29 ... e5

TAL

* * * * * *

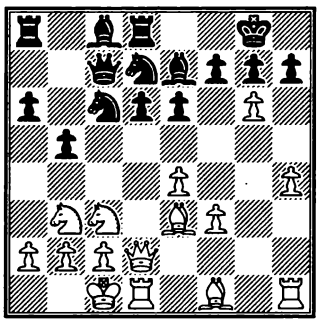
30 ♘c3!!

Thanks to the excellent far-sighted preparation, this sacrifice is decisive. **30 ... ♕d8** If 30 ... exd4 then 31 ♖xf6+! gxf6 32 ♘d5! wins. **31 ♘c6!** Now the queen has to relinquish her guard on the knight on f6, after which 32 ♖xf6+ wins. So Black lays down his arms.

Game No. 20

Tal – Koblencs

Riga 1957

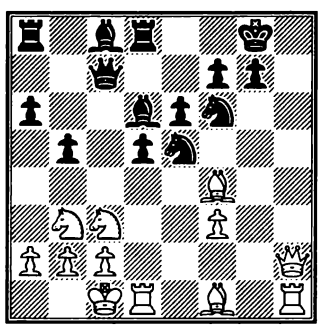


KOBLENCS

Position after 15 g6!

TAL

15 ... hxg6 This looks risky, but appears to be best' (Tal). **16 h5 gxh5 17 ♖xh5 ♘f6 18 ♖h1 d5** If possible, one should answer opposing flank attacks with a counterattack in the centre. Besides this, the move also has the specific objective of preventing the queen moving over to h2. 'I now sacrificed a second pawn in order not to lose the initiative' (Tal). **19 e5! ♘xe5** Of course not 19 ... ♕xe5 because of 20 ♗f4 ♕f5 21 ♗d3. **20 ♗f4 ♗d6 21 ♕h2**



KOBLENCS

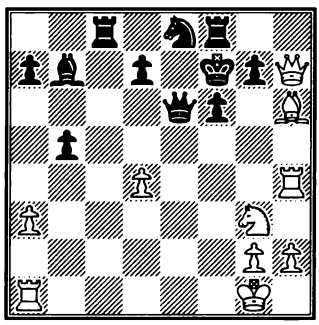
Position after 21 ♕h2

TAL

21 ... ♔f8 Black does not fall into the trap 21 ... ♘d3+ 22 ♔b1! In contrast to a forced combination, a trap gives a player the choice of whether to fall into it or not. It is obvious if the crafty idea of a trap is seen in time, it can simply be ignored. So it is risky to set traps which lead to a deterioration in one's own position, if they are rejected. **22 ♕h8+ ♘g8** At this point, I feel I must quote from my book on Chess Tactics.

'Now we should like to discuss a problem which has much to teach every practising player. As was correctly observed at the time, Black should simply play 22 ... ♔e7, but quite frankly, I did not think about this move – In a flash, the game Geller-Euwe, Zurich 1953, came to mind. Our brains work economically under such circumstances, so I did not remember every minute detail of the game, but rather the basic idea, which was to lure the opposing queen into one's own camp and immobilise her or to divert her from the main scene of action.

This is the highly interesting prototype upon which I based my aim: 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e3 c5 5 a3 ♗xc3+ 6 bxc3 b6 7 ♗d3 ♗b7 8 f3 ♘c6 9 ♘e2 0-0 10 0-0 ♘a5 11 e4 ♘e8 12 ♘g3 cxd4 13 cxd4 ♖c8 14 f4 ♘xc4 15 f5 f6 16 ♖f4 b5 17 ♖h4 ♕b6 18 e5 ♘xe5 19 fxe6 ♘xd3 20 ♕xd3 ♕xe6 21 ♕xh7+ ♔f7 22 ♗h6



EUWE

Position after 22 ♗h6

GELLER

22 ... ♖h8! (I was thinking of this idea of cutting off the queen when I played 22 ... ♘g8) 23 ♕xh8 ♖c2 24 ♖c1 ♖xg2+ 25 ♔f1 ♕b3 26 ♔e1 ♕f3 and White resigned.

'It seemed to me that it was worth leaving the knight pinned, if it kept the queen out of the game. It is not important that White forced a win after extreme complications. In this instance, I should like to comment upon a peculiar phenomenon of mental work.

'On the one hand, we preach that the chess master has to be someone with acquired knowledge since it would be wasteful and exhausting to go over known ground. On the other hand, however, we see from our example that Black would be mistaken to be mechanical and follow slavishly the known idea from the game Geller-Euwe.

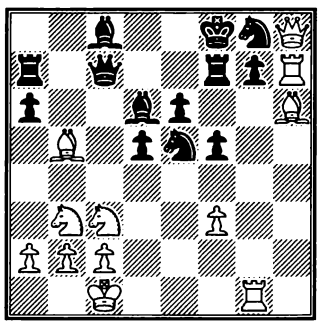
'It is as though the known idea puts us under a psychological spell which rules out the search for a more favourable alternative. Strictly speaking,

each method discovered is a means of help – it offers to our thinking processes a rule of thumb for our play, which we mechanically, often instinctively, put to use. Now to get to the salient, paradoxical point. On the one hand, complete dependence upon already-established knowledge induces us to play with a mistaken superficiality, on the other hand, it wastes time to cover old ground. No means has been found to break this contradictory vicious circle (even the greatest players in chess history have not succeeded in doing this!). But do not despair!

'Much depends upon the critical sense of players – upon the wisdom which is culled from past experience and recognised as being appropriate. Thorough practice and deep theoretical understanding often permit the events of the game to be followed knowledgeably and clearly allowing us to break every psychological spell, to adapt the method to the demands of the specific situation and to liberate ourselves from play which is automatic and unthinking.

To come back to the game, I still do not regret that I neglected to take the "more sensible" way (22 ... ♔e7). The following highly interesting duel is yet more evidence of the inexhaustible beauty of the art of chess.'

23 ♖h7 f5 24 ♗h6 ♖d7 25 ♗xb5 ♖f7 26 ♖g1 ♖a7



KOBLENCS

Position after 26 ... ♖a7

TAL

This colourful position came into the minds of both players, after move 22 had been played. White aims to break open the key point at Black's g7 – it seems to be cracking, but it is quite adequately protected. I was particularly pleased that I had completely succeeded in carrying out the idea adopted from Euwe. The white queen cannot budge an inch. If Black could now fully consolidate and then launch a counterattack, then, as Tal joked after the game, the queen on h8 together with the rook on h7 could only send a distant message of condolence to the white king. So White has to play energetically.

Don't think that you have been forgotten. Now it is up to you again. What would you play?

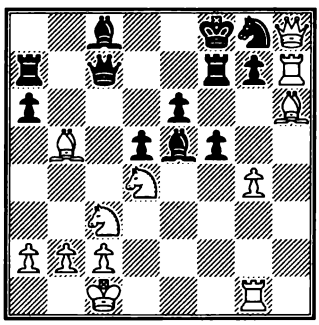
* * * * * *

27 ♘d4

White throws another piece into the fray. This aims at the relatively weak square e6 and sets a nice trap if Black plays the obvious 27 ... ♕b6.

Question 44 **Can you find the startling move that would follow?**

Black decides to sacrifice a piece, so that he can reduce the pressure on g7. **27 ... ♘g4 28 fxg4 ♗e5**



KOBLENCS

Position after 28 ... ♗e5

TAL

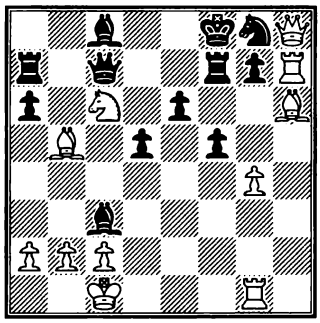
Black is a knight down, but in return, three white pieces are threatened. Black wants to get the initiative, so what should White play?

* * * * * *

29 ♘c6!

Enemy No. 1 is the bishop on e5! The text move initiates a novel attack. **29 ... ♗xc3** Black now expected the prosaic 30 bxc3 gxh6 31 ♘xa7 ♕xa7 after which he would have a counterattack. If 30 bxc3 Tal also gives

30 ... ♖b7 as adequate. Now, however, White plays a superb trump-card. It is your turn, please!



KOBLENCS

Position after 29 ... ♗xc3

TAL

* * * * * *

30 ♗e3!

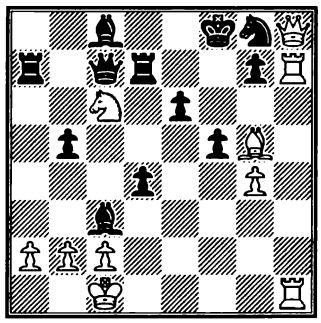
I had simply not sufficiently appreciated the strength of this move. It had just not occurred to me that White could be ready to relax this attack against g7. Yet White does not stick rigidly to the attack on g7, but creates another threat. It is not directed against the rook on a7, but against the king – a thunderous check is to be given on c5. **30 ... d4** So White has achieved his immediate objective – the black bishop on c3 is cut off from the kingside. Yet what is to happen now? We already know that in order to keep the initiative, one has to harass one's opponent with constant threats. Can you find the hidden threat which 30 ♗e3 sets up?

* * * * * *

31 ♖gh1! Tal's ability to play flat out is unparalleled. As his opponents well know, he has something nasty up his sleeve in every situation and all the time they are suspiciously examining what Tal might be up to. No wonder that they often get into serious time trouble! Yet here no such long pause for thought is necessary – the threat is as obvious as it is horrible.

Question 45 **Well, isn't it?**

31 ... ♖d7 To give the king some breathing space on f7. **32 ♗g5 axb5**



KOBLENCS

Position after 32 ... axb5

TAL

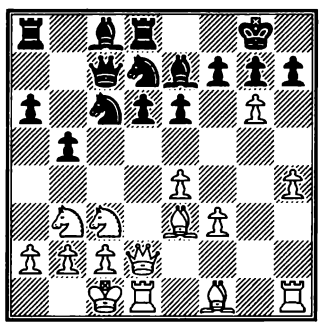
* * * * * *

Through which gap can the enemy stronghold now be stormed? **33 ♖1h6!!** Black cannot breathe. Now another threat has emerged, 34 ♖f6+ gxf6 35 ♗h6+ and there is no counter to this. **33 ... d3 34 bxc3 d2+ 35 ♔d1 ♕xc6** (Desperation) **36 ♖f6+ ♖f7 37 ♕xg7+ Resigns**.

Game No. 21

Tal – Stoltz

Telegraph game, 1959



STOLTZ

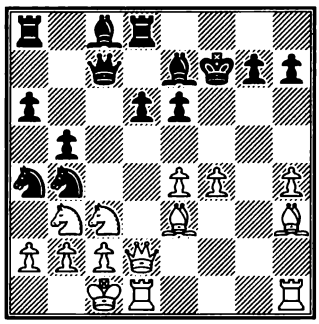
Position after 15 g6!

TAL

15 ... ♘c5 With the idea of ignoring the opponent's attack on the kingside and using the knight to support his own attack on the queenside – but the move has its drawbacks, too. **16 gxf7+ ♔xf7 17 ♗h3** Pressurising

the enemy weakness, which is the pawn on e6. **17 ... ♘a4** Black indeed wants to play actively, but this move poses no specific threats. White can select his next target in peace, 'now White's task consists in discovering his opponent's Achilles heel. At first glance it seems not to be g7, because Black can defend this sufficiently by playing ♗f6, so White's f-pawn is assigned to the mission of attack' wrote Tal.

18 f4 ♘b4

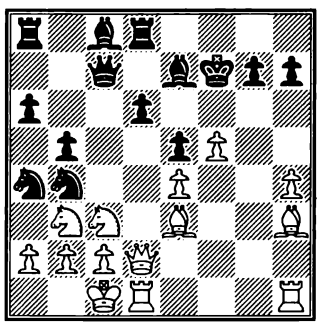


STOLTZ

Position after 18 ... ♘b4

TAL

Sometimes one allows oneself to be carried away by a piece formation which seems initially to be active. Yet if it contains no specific threats, it soon comes to nothing. Here the threat on the a-pawn is only apparent, as after 19 ... ♘xc3 20 bxc3 ♘xa2+ 21 ♔b2 there is no lifeline for the knight, so White can pursue his plan undisturbed. **19 f5 e5**



STOLTZ

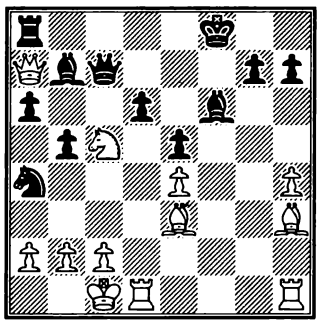
Position after 19 ... e5

TAL

White has allowed for the fact that the bishop on h3 has now become ineffective – its pressure has been nullified. However, here we see a typical positional transformation; the bishop has voluntarily relinquished its pressure on Black's e6, but in return has inflicted another positional injury on the enemy. In this instance it is easy to see that it's d5, and also the queen's pawn is backward and the diagonal a2-f7 has become weak and

vulnerable. In these types of situation this factor is then exploited by occupying the square by ♘d5.

Tal, however, does not succumb to this impulse. Let us see what he has to say, so that we can get an idea of what he was thinking. After 20 ♘d5 ♘xd5 21 ♕xd5+ ♔f8 it is not so easy to keep up the attack. Black threatens to open the centre by the powerful ... ♗b7 and ... d5. Of course White can take the black rook on a8. After 22 ♕xa8 ♗b7 23 ♕a7 ♖a8 White has the novel tactical reply 24 ♘d4, and because of the threat of ♘e6 he saves his queen. Yet it is an open question as to how favourable that may be. If 24 ... exd4 25 ♕xd4 ♗f6 26 ♕xd6+ ♕xd6 27 ♖xd6 ♗xb2+ 28 ♔b1 ♗xe4 we have a sharp position in which Black's initiative seems to be fairly dangerous.' White can also win the exchange in another variation by 22 f6 ♗xf6 23 ♕xa8 ♗b7 24 ♕a7 ♖a8 25 ♘c5!? which is a clever idea.



STOLTZ

Analysis after 25 ♘c5!?

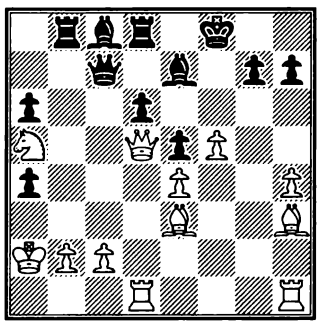
TAL

Question 46 **Could you analyse further and come to some conclusion about the line?**

'The following conclusion may be drawn from Tal's comments: when assessing possibilities, the winning of material ought not to be of too great importance, although material gain always constitutes a strong temptation. Yet an objective view encourages the player not to underestimate his opponent's counter chances. For this reason, Tal did not go in for the disadvantageous win of the exchange.

'From a tactical point of view, it is worth noting the queen's plight after she had strayed into the cul-de-sac. Also of interest is the way in which the sudden freeing move 22 f6 opened the diagonal and activated the bishop. Never forget that even our wooden pieces need 'air'!

'White chooses another, amazingly simple way to bring down the enemy position. **20 ♘xa4! ♘xa2+** White has, of course, seen this intervening check. **21 ♔b1 bxa4 22 ♘a5!** The retreat to a1 is too passive, but the leap to a5 tempts Black to think of trapping the knight. Black's position is already near to collapse. **22 ... ♖b8 23 ♕d5+** There was also 23 ♔xa2 ♖b5 24 b4, but White was not happy about the counter-thrust 24 ... d5, after which Black can still stir up trouble. **23 ... ♔f8 24 ♔xa2**



STOLTZ

Position after 24 ♔xa2

TAL

24 ... ♕xc2

Question 47 **Why not 24 ... ♖b5 ?**

25 ♖d2! ♖xb2+ 26 ♔a1 ♕c3 In order to retain some prospects after 27 ♖xb2 a3 28 ♗c1 axb2+ 29 ♗xb2 ♕f3, but Tal's next move breaks up his opponent's attack.

27 ♕d3! Black resigned, as the position is hopeless after the forced exchange of queens.

First Come, First Served

As you have seen, when kings castle on opposite sides, the battle resembles a sprint race – speed and energy decide. In the following game, Tal admitted to playing the opening somewhat carelessly. White got good attacking chances but committed the serious mistake of not proceeding quickly and energetically enough. The Rigan grandmaster seized his opportunity – his pawn cut like a knife into the opposing phalanx and opened a vein for attack along the a-file. The finish was crowned by a splendid tactical coup. Black's minority attack on the queenside (two pawns attack three opposing ones) is typical of this type of game.

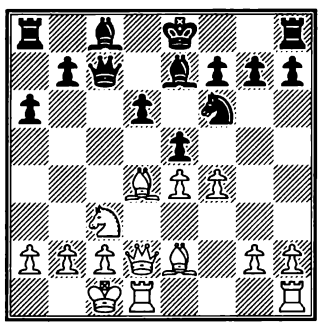
Game No. 22

Honfi – Tal

Sukhumi 1972

Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 e6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗e2 ♕c7 7 f4 d6 8 ♗e3 ♗e7 9 ♕d2 ♘f6 10 0-0-0 ♘xd4 'An innovation of dubious value. Castles followed by b5 is preferable' (Tal). **11 ♗xd4 e5**

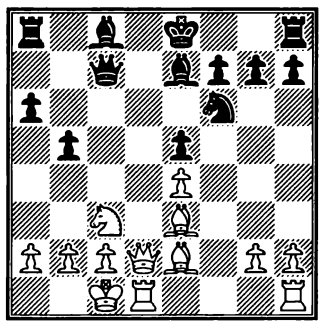


TAL

Position after 11 ... e5

HONFI

This often happens in chess – one mistake leads to a chain reaction. After the initial exchange, the bishop occupies d4 and White threatens to cross the demarcation line with e4-e5 with a spatial advantage. Black can only choose from two evils; either he must submit to the pawn advance or give up his d5 square. **12 ♗e3 b5 13 fxe5 dxe5**



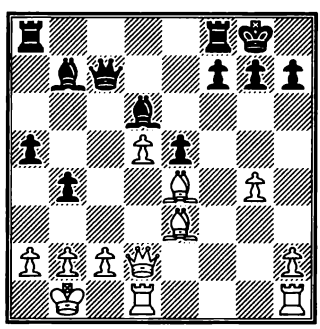
TAL

Position after 13 ... dxe5

HONFI

14 ♘d5! ♘xd5 15 exd5 ♗d6 16 g4 ♗b7 17 ♔b1 0-0 18 ♗f3 This does not really spoil matters, but more logical was 18 ♗d3, the open diagonal is just made for the bishop. **18 ... a5 19 ♗e4** Better late than never. **19 ... b4**

The a-pawn is going to follow the example of the b-pawn and set up an outpost on the fifth rank in front of the enemy pawns, until, after the necessary preparations, the pawn advance b4-b3 can take place. The common characteristic of such a minority attack in the Sicilian is that Black has the half-open c-file at his disposal, after 3 ... cxd4, and White must not underestimate its effectiveness. White now ought to be feeling the calm before the storm, and consequently, he ought to play energetically. The next move, which prefaces his attacking plan, proves to be too time-consuming. Tal uses this breathing space to get his pieces into favourable dangerous positions.



TAL

Position after 19 ... b4

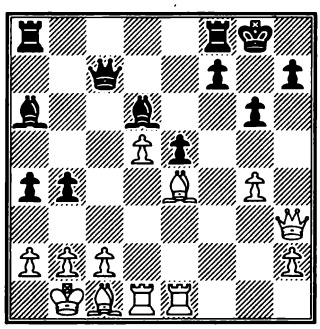
HONFI

20 ♕g2

As Tal pointed out, 20 ♕d3! would have been much more dangerous for Black. White feared that his bishop would be cut off, after 20 ... ♗a6 21 ♗xh7+ ♔h8 22 ♕e4 g6.

Question 48 **What could he then play?**

It would appear that White hopes to win at leisure – slowly but surely. No wonder that Tal decides first come, first served! **20 ... a4 21 ♕h3 g6** White has indeed created a target on g6, but his own queen now prevents the h-pawn from making the run to h4-h5. **22 ♗c1 ♗a6 23 ♖he1** There is no time to open the h-file by 23 ♕g2 and h4-h5. White wants to bring the rook to e3, in order to prevent the advance of the black b-pawn.



TAL

Position after 23 ♖he1

HONFI

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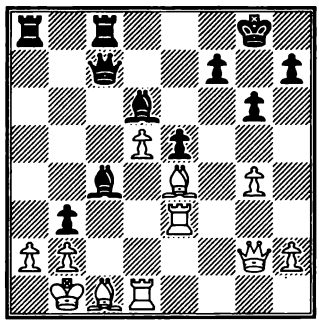
23 ... ♗c4!

Black does not switch over to the attack too quickly by means of 23 ... b3 because after 24 cxb3 axb3 Black can close the a-file with a2-a3, when a sacrificial assault on the white stronghold would meet with difficulties. The bishop move threatens an eventual sacrifice on a2: if ♔xa2, the king is diverted onto a2, and White has not got the saving move a3 after Black's ... b2-b3+. **24 ♖e3 ♖fc8 25 ♕g2** White thinks he has covered everything adequately, but he is immediately corrected on this.

Perhaps he ought to have decided on 25 b3. **25 ... b3! 26 cxb3** Also after the more tenacious 26 ♖c3 bxa2+ 27 ♔a1 ♕a5 Black's attack would be extremely dangerous in Tal's opinion. **26 ... axb3**



TAL

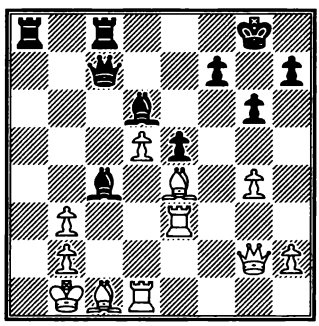
Position after 26 ... axb3

HONFI

Question 49 **Normally White would try to avoid opening lines, but 27 a3 fails here. Why?**

27 axb3

How should Tal continue from the next diagram?



TAL

Position after 27 axb3

HONFI

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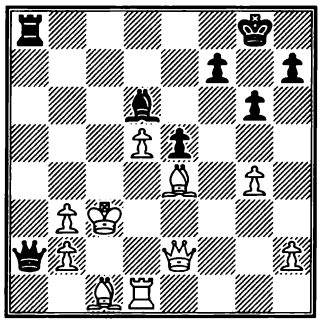
27 ... ♗e2!

A decoy sacrifice! The queen is diverted onto an unprotected square and the rest is forced. **28 ♕xe2** If 28 ♖c3, then the strong 28 ... ♗xd1 could

follow: the two rooks are superior to the queen, because of the exposed position of the king. **28 ... ♕a5 29 ♖c3 ♕a2+!** 'Neater than 29 ... ♖xc3 30 bxc3 ♕a1+ 31 ♔c2 ♖a2+ 32 ♔d3 ♖xe2 33 ♔xe2 ♕xc3 34 ♗h6,' was Tal's comment here. **30 ♔c2 ♖xc3+ 31 ♔xc3**



TAL

Position after 31 ♔xc3

HONFI

31 ... ♗b4+! This sacrifice, which draws out the king, is the main point of the combination. **32 ♔xb4** The white pieces on e4 and e2 do their king a disservice after 32 ♔d3 ♕xb3 mate. **32 ... ♕a5+ 33 ♔c4 ♕a6+ 34 Resigns**.

On the Edge of the Precipice

The next game is surely the most sensational game seen in modern chess history – from both a competitive and a creative standpoint. Before the last game in the Candidates match for the World Championship between Tal and Larsen, the score stood at 4½-4½. In this deciding game Tal sacrificed a knight for a pawn, just to improve the position of his bishop in the early middlegame, by opening the diagonal b1-h7. No wonder the game evoked a flood of critical analysis. Does not such neglect of chess material border on heresy – even more so, in a game against one of the strongest grandmasters of our time? It is highly instructive to listen to the comments from the plaintiff's own mouth at the critical positions.

Game No. 23

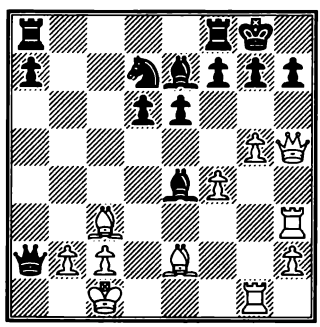
Tal – Larsen

Candidates match, Bled 1965

Sicilian Defence

At our 'Council of War' on the morning before the game, the first thing to do was to predict Larsen's attitude towards this deciding game. In view of his fighting style we decided that Larsen would select the double-edged Sicilian Defence. The next task in the training session was to outline the forthcoming battle in more detail. We looked at different systems which Larsen had played and finally we fixed our eyes on the complicated Scheveningen Variation. The following training game was played in which Tal, with limited thinking-time, was White of course.

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 e6 5 ♘c3 d6 6 ♗e3 ♘f6 7 f4 ♗e7 8 ♕f3 0-0 9 ♗e2 ♗d7 10 0-0-0 ♘xd4 11 ♗xd4 ♗c6 12 g4 ♕a5 13 g5 ♘d7 14 ♖hg1 b5 15 ♕h5 b4 16 ♖d3! bxc3 17 ♗xc3 ♕xa2? (17 ... ♕a4) **18 ♖h3 ♗xe4**



KOBLENCS

Position after 18 ... ♗xe4

TAL

19 g6! ♗xg6 20 ♕xh7+! Resigns.

Perhaps this game is not very valuable from a theoretical viewpoint – but with regard to the attacking technique it is, however, well worth noting for the following reasons:

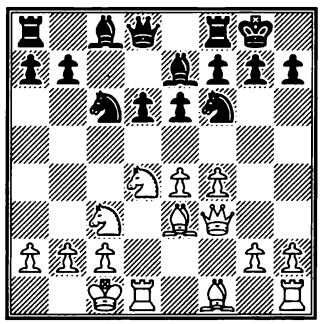
(1) The movement of the rook from d3 to h3, in front of its own row of pawns.

(2) The classical move 19 g6! which removes the cover from h7 and opens the g-file.

(3) The invasion on h7, which forces the bishop on g6 to vacate the g-file, after which White's pieces combine in harmony to produce a mating attack.

I was happy to lose such a lovely game – Tal's creative mood had to be stimulated and it was very important at that particular time, because in the previous game he had suffered defeat after a difficult struggle for survival. Naturally, it was particularly satisfying that our prediction was then borne out in the game which follows, as far as move 8.

9 0-0-0



LARSEN

Position after 9 0-0-0

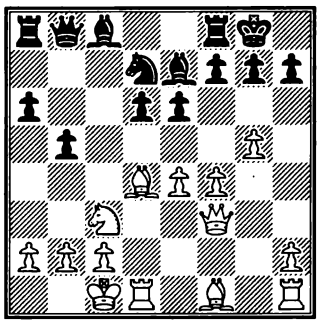
TAL

This is more energetic than 9 ♗e2. **9 ... ♕c7** A normal move in the Sicilian Defence. The danger of playing such obvious moves is that one accepts them too automatically in the opening. Here the move is directed against 10 g4, after which 10 ... ♘xd4 11 ♖xd4 e5 12 ♖c4 ♗xg4! could follow. Preferable, however, was 9 ... ♗d7, as after the text move White can displace the queen and is then able to proceed with g4. **10 ♘db5 ♕b8 11 g4 a6 12 ♘d4 ♘xd4 13 ♗xd4 b5**

'It is theoretically important to establish what would have happened after 13 ... e5. I still do not know, even now,' wrote Larsen in the Latvian chess magazine *Sahs*. For his part, Tal said of this position, '... an extremely important moment. After Larsen's text-move, it is immediately easy to see that White's attack threatens to break through more quickly, which is of decisive significance in such positions. Black had to play 13 ... e5, upon

which I considered continuing the attack as follows: 14 g5 ♗g4 15 ♕g3 exd4 (but not 15 ... ♗xd1? 16 gxf6 ♗xf6 17 ♘d5 exd4 18 ♘xf6+ ♔h8 19 ♖g1) 16 gxf6 dxc3 17 fxe7 cxb2+ 18 ♔b1 ♗xd1.

The position would be simplified, and Black would have good defensive chances. **14 g5 ♘d7**

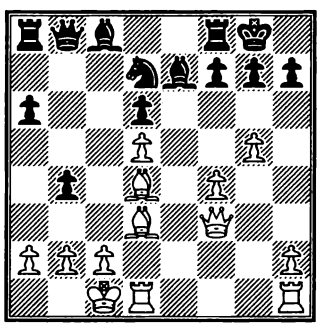


LARSEN

Position after 14 ... ♘d7

TAL

'How should the initiative be built up further? To begin with, I wanted to make the prophylactic move 15 a3, in order to secure the square c3 for the knight. The variation 15 ... b4 16 axb4 ♕xb4 17 ♕h5 ♖b8 18 ♖d3 ♕xb2+ 19 ♔d2 seemed to be promising, but then I looked at the knight sacrifice on d5, which opens up lines and diagonals for the attack. The strange variation which I sorted out (see note to move 18) strengthened my decision not to pass over such a tempting idea. It seemed simply shameful to turn down the sacrifice, and I finally stuck resolutely to the decision after the following silent monologue, "Mischa, if you lose the match in the end, in no way will cowardice have been the reason for your defeat" (Tal). **15 ♗d3! b4** More cautious was 15 ... ♗b7, followed probably by 16 a3. **16 ♘d5!? exd5 17 exd5**



LARSEN

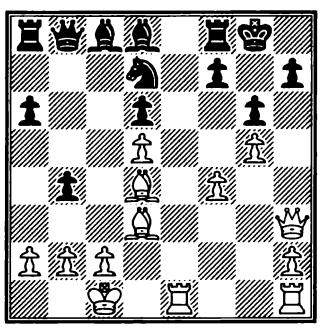
Position after 17 exd5

TAL

'The 16th move was a purely positional sacrifice. The black pieces stand crowded together on the queenside (rook on a8, queen on b8, bishop on c8) and it will not be easy for them to hurry to the aid of their king. The open e-file acts as a barrier and both white bishops are aimed at the enemy king. Now the routine double bishop sacrifice on g7 and h7 is a threat, and Black will be forced to incur several weaknesses. After 17 ... g6 White can continue the attack with 18 h4 or perhaps with the more active move 18 ♕h3. Larsen attempts to defend h7 by moving the f-pawn but, in doing so, he particularly strengthens White's black-squared bishop' (Tal).

17 ... f5 If we look at Larsen's opinion, we get the impression that Tal's assessment of the position after 17 ... g6 may paint too general and optimistic a picture, 'I am now convinced', wrote Larsen after the match, 'that 17 ... g6 was much better. White can only play h4, as after 18 ♖de1! ♗d8 Black would have the brilliant counter ... ♗b6. Black's position looks to be particularly vulnerable after 18 h4, but I could then have played the very strong 18 ... ♘c5. After 19 h5 ♘xd3+, followed by 20 ... ♗f5, I can see no good continuation for White, just as after 19 ♗xc5 dxc5 20 h5 ♖a7! all is well.'

Was Tal's intuition sheer bluff? Shamkovich gave an answer to this, after a period of just one year(!!), in *Shakhmaty*. 'After the move recommended by Larsen (17 ... g6), White gets the better game: 18 ♖de1! ♗d8 (if 18 ... ♖e8 White wins back the piece with a lasting initiative after 19 ♗f6) 19 ♕h3!



LARSEN

Analysis after 19 ♕h3!

TAL

Now the knight has the following moves:

(a) 19 ... ♘f6 20 ♕h6 ♘h5 21 ♗e2 and White wins;

(b) 19 ... ♘e5 (or 19 ... ♘c5) 20 ♕h6 ♘xd3+ 21 cxd3 ♕c7+ 22 ♔b1 f6 23 gxf6 ♕f7 (the threat was 24 ♖e7) 24 ♖e6! and White's pressure is not

shaken off, 24 ... ♗xe6 25 dxe6 ♕b7 26 f7+ ♖xf7 27 exf7+ ♕xf7 28 f5! with a decisive opening of the file.'

Also, Larsen's opinion that after 17 ... g6 18 ♖de1 ♗d8 Black has the brilliant counter ... ♗b6 is exaggerated as 19 ♕h3! again demonstrates.

Question 50 **What is the idea behind this move?**

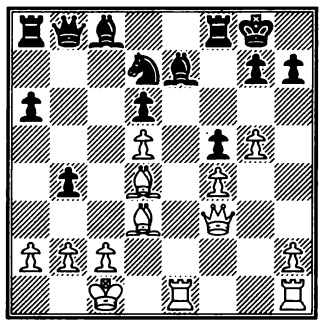
It is difficult to judge whether Shamkovich's analysis finally settles the argument over the turning-point in the game. However, it gives us an excuse to go into further details on the role of analysis in chess.

We have already illustrated positions which could easily be assessed in terms of their outward positional appearances (e.g. Tal – Tringov; the backward development and the exposed position of the black king permitted a quick objective assessment in favour of White). Yet in the present position, after Tal's 17th move, the outcome is unclear because the position is full of complex dynamic possibilities. The Soviet master I.Lipnitsky has termed such positions 'critical'. He wrote, 'Players often come across critical positions of this kind in actual play. General positional considerations are not enough for a correct assessment of a critical position, rather one has to submit the position to specific analysis, i.e. a calculation of concrete variations. Such analysis enables one to see the different forms that the future dynamic development of the game may take. So, on the one hand critical positions may only be correctly evaluated on an analytical basis of this kind. On the other hand, however, analysis means that our original assessment of the position has to be converted into specific calculations of variations. Thus there is a vicious circle. Analysis depends upon assessment, but assessment is based upon analysis! Does this conform to a principle of some kind?

'Every process of cognition, chess included, is carried out by analysis and synthesis, which complement each other. It follows, then, that in chess also, analysis and synthesis go hand in hand. However, in chess language, the term synthesis becomes "assessment", which essentially means the same thing.'

Later Lipnitsky draws the following conclusion, which is important for the practising player, 'the skills of assessing and analysing form the backbone of a chess player's actual playing strength'. The question which

now becomes important concerns the extent to which a position ought to be analysed. Obviously the evaluation of a critical position must remain unclear if the analysis leads to another unclear and therefore 'critical' position. So in a critical position the main aim is to obtain, by use of analysis, a position with clearly recognisable features. In our game this has happened, for the given variations have finally led to clearly defined positions. **18 ♖de1**

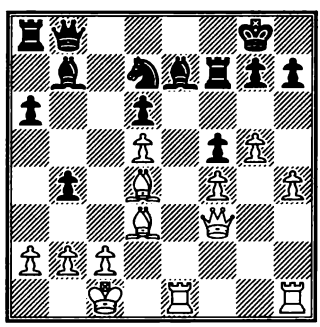


LARSEN

Position after 18 ♖de1

TAL

Now Black is presented with an unpleasant choice; should he move the bishop to d8 or defend it with ♖f7? In the latter case, he has to reckon with the g-file being opened up (after the gain of tempo from g6!). But if 18 ... ♗d8 Tal had thought out the following line: 19 ♕h5 ♘c5 20 ♗xg7 ♘xd3+ 21 ♔b1 (not 21 cxd3 ♕c7+) 21 ... ♘xe1 (21 ... ♘xf4 22 ♕h6) 22 g6 ♔xg7 23 ♕xh7+ ♔f6 24 g7 ♖f7 and now follows the decisive promotion of the pawn – into a knight 25 g8=♘ mate. **18 ... ♖f7 19 h4 ♗b7!** This is stronger than the passive 19 ... ♘f8 20 h5 ♕c7 21 g6 ♖f6 22 h6! with a complete breakthrough on the kingside.



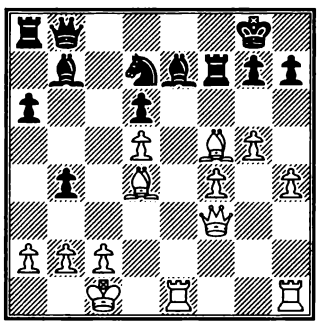
LARSEN

Position after 19 ... ♗b7!

TAL

20 ♗xf5

After 20 h5 Black could get a good position by 20 ... ♘e5! 21 fxe5 ♗xg5+ 22 ♔b1 dxe5 After 20 g6 hxg6 21 h5 Black closes the h-file by the excellent defensive move 21 ... g5 and after the further 22 ♗xf5, Tal did not like the counter 22 ... ♗f6! Of the text move, Tal wrote, 'this move arises purely out of the context of the situation. If it had not been the last, deciding game, I should have played the much sharper 20 g6 hxg6 21 h5 g5 22 ♗xf5 (weaker was 22 h6 g4 23 hxg7 ♗f6 or 23 ... ♘f6 24 ♖xe7 gxf3 25 ♗xf6 ♖xe7). After 22 ♗xf5 White has dangerous threats available: unplayable for instance is 22 ... ♖xf5 23 ♖xe7 ♘e5 because of 24 h6 ♘xf3 25 h7+ ♔f8 26 ♖xg7 with unavoidable mate. But I now wanted to play safe, as during the game I could not find a forced win after 22 ... ♗f6 (instead of ♖xf5) 23 ♗e6 ♕f8 (not 23 ... ♗xd4 24 fxg5 then g6). This position must be won – I was convinced about that, but experience had taught me not to get involved in calculating long complex variations. One can easily get into time trouble and at all events the text move gave me a better position.

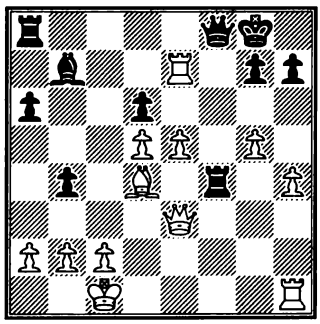


LARSEN

Position after 20 ♗xf5

TAL

20 ... ♖xf5 After the move recommended by Larsen, 20 ... ♘f8, then 21 ♕e4 with the threat 22 ♗xh7+ and g6 would be strongest. **21 ♖xe7 ♘e5** The passive 21 ... ♖f7 would lead to the complete exposure of Black's king, after 22 ♖xf7 ♔xf7 23 g6+ hxg6 24 h5. By playing his tactical text move, Larsen makes an attempt to regain the initiative, yet Tal is on guard. **22 ♕e4 ♕f8 23 fxe5 ♖f4 24 ♕e3**



LARSEN

Position after 24 ♕e3

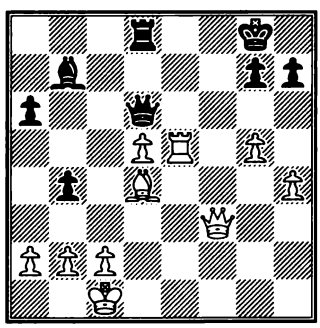
TAL

24 ... ♖f3

After this move, Black loses by force. Besides, Larsen was already in some time trouble – he only had 7 minutes left for 16 moves. The main variation was as follows: 24 ... ♗xd5 25 exd6 ♖xd4 26 ♕xd4 ♗xh1 27 b3. Now it seems best for Black to give back the piece by 27 ... ♗f3 28 ♕c4+ ♔h8 29 ♖f7 ♕xd6 30 ♖xf3, which offers some chances of saving the game.'

Question 51 **What does White play if Black tries to exchange rooks with 27 ... ♖e8 in this variation?**

25 ♕e2 ♕xe7 26 ♕xf3 dxe5 27 ♖e1 ♖d8 It is strange in chess, how much can depend upon one detail of the position. Black loses after 27 ... ♖f8 28 ♖xe5 ♕xe5 29 ♕xf8+ and 30 ♗xe5 because, after 30 ... ♗xd5, the white bishop has a check on d6! **28 ♖xe5 ♕d6**



LARSEN

Position after 28 ... ♕d6

TAL

29 ♕f4! Thanks to this little tactical idea White gets two more pawns, for 29 ... ♗xd5 cannot be played because of 30 ♖e8+. The rest is easy to understand. **29 ... ♖f8 30 ♕e4 b3 31 axb3 ♖f1+ 32 ♔d2 ♕b4+ 33 c3 ♕d6 34 ♗c5** A tactical blow, although of course, other moves also won. **34 ... ♕xc5 35 ♖e8+ ♖f8 36 ♕e6+ Resigns**. If 36 ... ♔h8 37 ♕f7 wins.

In my opinion the most complex game in chess history on the theme of the initiative sacrifice. Is this the chess of the future?

A Whole Bishop for an Attacking Tempo!

In the previous examples, the pawns did the preparatory work; they served as battering rams, broke up the protective pawn fronts around the enemy king and thus opened up routes for the attacking forces. In the next game, the pieces themselves create this situation without help from the pawns by operating in front of their own pawns.

The remarkable thing about this game is the speed with which White conjures up an attack and forces his opponent on the defensive. He loses a minimum amount of time and manages to get the powerful queen on to the kingside at h4 – this costs him a whole bishop! The main support for the queen comes from the knight on f5. Again you will be struck by how the peculiar action of the knight makes it ideal for fighting at close quarters.

For a better understanding of this game, however, we should like to quote Vladimir Vukovic, as this characterises Tal's fighting attitude very well. There are instances 'when a player goes in for a risky sacrifice, or as Spielmann would say "makes a true sacrifice". Neither the expert player, nor the onlooker can analyse the full consequences of such sacrifices. The sacrifice is risky; intelligent and well judged it may be, but it is nevertheless risky. The expert likes to entertain doubts in such instances and to consider how he is to reduce the sacrificial combination to an analysis of its consequences in order to discover its chess "truth".

Things are quite different, however, for the onlookers. They are bound up with the peculiar tension of the events on the board, and the sacrifice for them represents a sign that a decision is at hand. The spectator assumes that a risky sacrifice embodies the fighting spirit of the player, who becomes – their knight in shining armour!'

The following game maintains a sharp tension since Tal had to allow his opponent certain advantages (as we have seen so often!) and the game took on an extraordinarily double-edged appearance. However, the most important thing in Tal's mind was to seize the initiative and to give his opponent complex problems to solve (as we have seen so often!)

Tal's 15th move was commented on by Gligoric and Ragozin in the tournament book and their remarks throw some light upon the problems of playing against Tal. This position is known throughout the chess world. Is Black's position defensible? Was Tal's attacking idea sound? People are still trying to get to the truth of this by analysing forced variations. The chess world still has difficulty in deciding, even after a few months, a hundred days, two thousand four hundred hours have elapsed. What about Vasily Smyslov? He had to make up his mind in one hour!'

Game No. 24

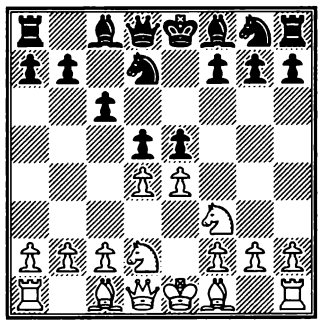
Tal – Smyslov

Candidates tournament, Bled 1959

Caro-Kann Defence

1 e4 c6 There is a psychological reason for choosing this solid defence. Assuming that Tal was going to attack in any event, one can resist strongly with the Caro-Kann. If the attacker stubbornly pursues his course, then his aggressive attitude can easily rebound on him. It is worth noting that against Botvinnik in the return match of 1961, Tal did not come to terms with this very stratagem on the part of his opponent and came to grief. **2 d3!** This move deserves an exclamation mark in the following respect. One may call it mental laziness, a tendency towards automatic play or conservation of nervous energy – whatever the reason, Smyslov is in the habit of playing the opening moves nonchalantly. By playing the text-move, White wants to avoid the well-documented theoretical

continuations. This stratagem proves to be successful: Smyslov does not take the trouble to engross himself in the unexplored opening problems, plays somewhat loosely and does not achieve complete equality. **2 ... d5 3 ♘d2 e5** Preferable was 3 ... g6. **4 ♘gf3 ♘d7 5 d4**



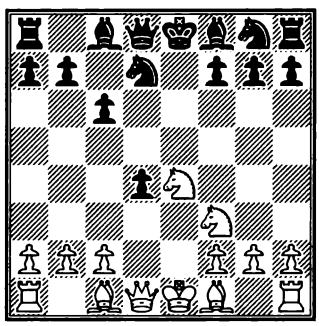
SMYSLOV

Position after 5 d4

TAL

Specific positional assessment! Even if it costs a tempo, this opening of the centre complies with the requirements of the position. **5 ... dxe4** The critics denounced this move. Smyslov should have played 5 ... exd4 and after 6 exd5 cxd5 7 ♘xd4 have left himself with an isolated pawn on d5. Compared with opening the centre, this solution would undoubtedly have been preferable – but the critics did not consider, in their censure, that Smyslov has an aversion to isolani (in his own position, of course!). Here again, as is so often the case, subjective likes or dislikes dominate and overshadow the objectively best move.

6 ♘xe4 exd4



SMYSLOV

Position after 6 ... exd4

TAL

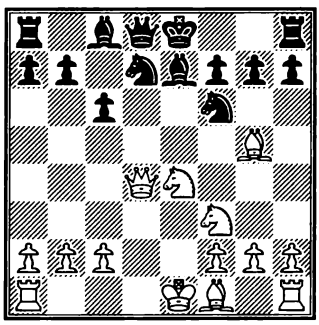
7 ♕xd4

Let us follow Tal's thoughts on this position, 'I examined 7 ♕e2, but after 7 ... ♗b4+ 8 c3 dxc3 9 bxc3 ♗e7 10 ♘d6+ ♔f8 it is unclear as to

whether White has sufficient compensation for the pawn as the queen gets in the way of the king's bishop and hampers the quick development of the kingside, whereas 7 ♗c4 ♘b6 8 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 9 ♘e5+ ♔e8 10 ♕h5+ g6 11 ♘xg6 hxg6 12 ♕xg6+ ♔d7 13 ♕f5+ only leads to perpetual check'.

The queen move emphasises the positional disadvantages in Black's position; the relative weakness of d6, the unfortunate position of the knight on d7 which delays the development of the queen's bishop for a long time and thereby the whole queenside, and last but not least, the clear lead that White has in development.

7 ... ♘gf6 8 ♗g5 ♗e7



SMYSLOV

Position after 8 ... ♗e7

TAL

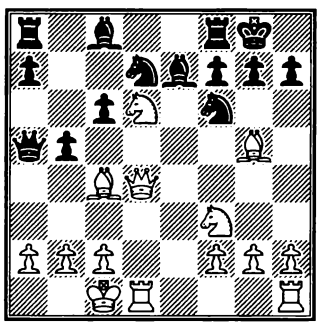
Now the game has reached a point at which individual chess style determines the choice of continuation. Undoubtedly, you will have made the following important observations from the previous examples:

(1) In the games, the type of opening was closely related to the ensuing middle game.

(2) The strategic exploitation of advantages gained from the opening was combined with attacks on the enemy king.

The attack on the king is one of the most effective weapons in Tal's arsenal. Here lies the real strength and greatness of the ex-world champion and the next move is particularly indicative of his style. He could have exploited his advantage from the opening at this point in the following strategic way: 9 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 10 ♕xd6 ♕e7+ 11 ♕xe7+ ♔xe7 12 0-0-0 and transpose into a better endgame. (Levenfish, who was a great teacher in Soviet chess, advised that at every stage in the opening and middlegame one ought to be ready to meet a sudden transition into the endgame and to have its outlines continually in mind.)

If this were the only way to capitalise on the advantage from the opening then of course Tal would be satisfied with the requirements of the position, but as he has found a second possibility, he chooses the latter. Psychologically, it would have been unwise to allow Smyslov, who is one of the greatest endgame specialists, to transpose into a situation where he would feel quite at home. So Tal decides to conjure up a complex attacking game over the board. **9 0-0-0! 0-0** Castles is virtually forced because of the threat of 10 ♘d6+. **10 ♘d6 ♕a5** Black has ambitious plans – he is playing for a counterattack. The disadvantage of this plan is that the queen gets too far away from the kingside. If Smyslov had foreseen the consequences, he would surely have simplified the position with 10 ... ♘b6. **11 ♗c4!** White lays the bait. Besides, he would have nothing after 11 ♔b1 ♗xd6 12 ♕xd6 ♘e4. **11 ... b5** This move was played rapidly and Tal could smile contentedly to himself – his great opponent had bitten. After 11 ... ♘b6, as Bronstein observed, White would still have an advantage 12 ♗b3 c5 13 ♕e5 or 12 ... ♘bd5 13 ♘xc8 followed by ♖he1.



SMYSLOV

Position after 11 ... b5

TAL

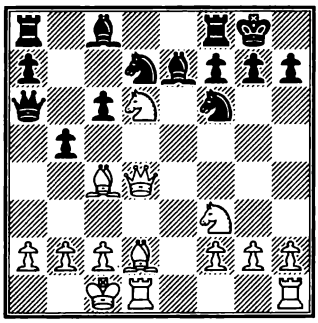
What would you play now?

* * * * * *

12 ♗d2!

An excellent preparatory move. The square g5 is vacated for attacking purposes and a perfect attacking position is created for the knight on f3. **12 ... ♕a6** Black obstinately carries through his attacking plan, as he does not want to leave himself a somewhat worse endgame after 12 ... ♕a4 13 ♘xc8 ♖axc8 14 ♗b3 ♕xd4 15 ♘xd4.

Question 52 **What would White play after 12 ... ♕c7 ?**



SMYSLOV

Position after 12 ... ♕a6

TAL

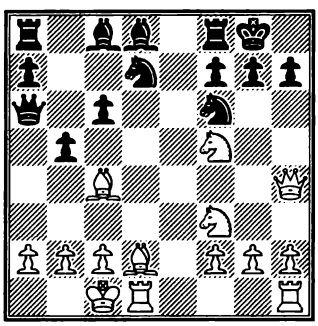
* * * * * *

13 ♘f5!!

White must have already seen this move when he played 11 ♗c4, because after 13 ♗b3 c5 there would be unavoidable loss of material, without compensation. **13 ... ♗d8** The square f6 must be defended. A lovely variation would follow after 13 ... ♗c5 14 ♕h4 bxc4.

Question 53 **Try to find it.**

14 ♕h4



SMYSLOV

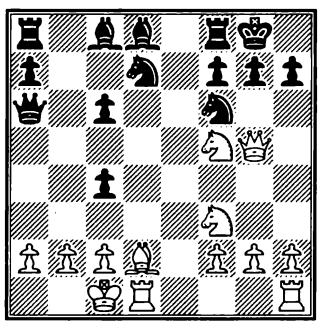
Position after 14 ♕h4

TAL

14 ... bxc4 After 14 ... ♘e5 a devastating sacrifice would finish the game: 15 ♘h6+ gxh6 16 ♗xh6 ♘g6 17 ♖xd8. Also after 14 ... ♘d5 the black king's position would be exposed by typical destructive sacrifices.

> ***Question 54*** **But undoubtedly you will want to find out for yourself. Please do!**

15 ♕g5 This was the position which White had visualised. Of course, a sizeable proportion of Tal's attacking style relies upon intuition. Yet this intuition is based upon Tal's firm belief that on the one hand he will acquire a lasting initiative and, on the other, his pieces will be able to take up dangerous positions. The extent to which an attacker takes risks is dictated by his positional and tactical instincts. As already mentioned in the introductory remarks to the game, Smyslov had to contend with the practical difficulty of dealing with all complications in the relative scarcity of time during the course of the game.



SMYSLOV

Position after 15 ♕g5

TAL

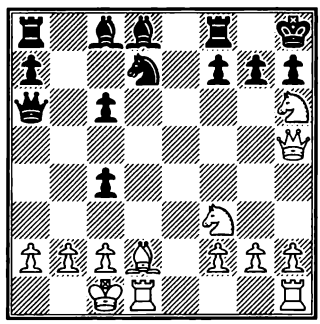
15 ... ♘h5

The attacker always has to consider the return of material gained by the opponent. Whilst the sacrificer is recapturing the material, the defender tries to gain a tempo with which to consolidate his position. How often, in double-edged positions, can the lack of a single tempo be decisive! As you will see, the text-move aims to win time for the capture on a2. Black could also have tried to gain the desired tempo with 15 ... ♘e8, but after this move White would get the better of his opponent with a combination.

> ***Question* 55** **How do you see the game going after 15 ... ♘e8 ?**

One can well understand Smyslov's rejection of 15 ... g6, because it weakens h6. In fact, by later analysis, it was discovered that after 16 ♗c3 ♕xa2 17 ♘h6+ ♔g7 18 ♘h4 ♕a1+ 19 ♔d2 ♕a6 20 ♘4f5+ ♔h8 21 ♔e2! ♖e8+ 22 ♔f1 White can maintain his threatening position (Gligoric and Ragozin).

However, if 18 ... ♖e8 then 19 ♖he1 ♖e6 20 ♘g4 (increasing the pressure on the pinned piece!) 20 ... ♕a1+ 21 ♔d2 (now the threat of ♖xd7 is frustrated!) 21 ... ♕a6 22 ♕h6+ ♔g8 23 ♖xe6 fxe6 24 ♘xg6 ♘e4+ 25 ♔e2 ♘xc3+ 26 bxc3 hxg6 27 ♕xg6+ ♔f8 28 ♘h6 with forced mate. During the game Tal was satisfied that after 16 ♘h6+ ♔g7 17 ♗c3 he could call upon two threats against the pinned piece: 18 ♘g4 or ♖xd7. If 17 ... ♕xa2 he would have played 18 ♖he1. **16 ♘h6+ ♔h8 17 ♕xh5**



SMYSLOV

Position after 17 ♕xh5

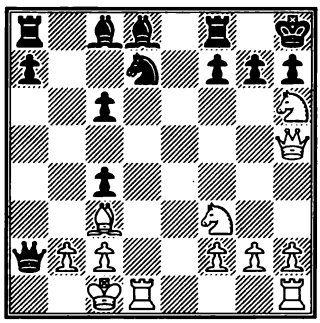
TAL

17 ... ♕xa2 This proves to be the decisive mistake. Yet Smyslov's thinking is understandable. He was counterattacking and did not want to miss any opportunity to do so: moreover, the capture on a2 is to some extent a natural consequence of 15 ... ♘h5. However, it is this very psychological desire to counterattack which is responsible for allowing Black's vigilance to slumber. Correct would have been 17 ... ♗f6! Tal would have replied as follows: 18 ♗c3! ♗xc3 19 ♘g5 g6 20 ♘hxf7+ ♖xf7 21 ♘xf7+ ♔g7 22 ♕f3 ♗f6 23 ♘d6.

White had calculated as far as this and had concluded that Black's undeveloped queenside had to give him some winning chances. Yet, nevertheless, Tal was making a typical error – he had stopped too soon in his calculations. In other words, he had not calculated far enough, whereas Gligoric and Ragozin have done (admittedly in the kind of peace which was permitted to neither Tal nor Smyslov) and they found 23 ... ♕xa2 24 ♘e8+ ♔f7 25 ♖xd7+ (what else?) 25 … ♔xe8 and White is unable to reinforce the attack.

Naturally this latter variation in no way belittles Tal's courageous approach, nor does it detract from the creative value of this Titanic struggle. This is modern chess, and future chess will develop along these lines!

18 ♗c3



SMYSLOV

Position after 18 ♗c3

TAL

18 ... ♘f6

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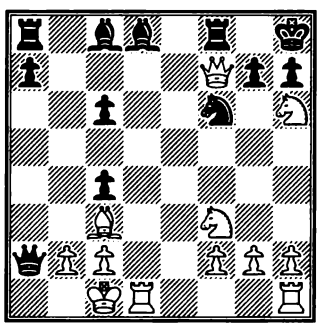
By playing 18 ... f6 Black could have blocked the fearsome bishop on the long diagonal, but then the weakness of the back rank would have been brought into focus.

Question 56 **How?**

19 ♕xf7!



SMYSLOV

Position after 19 ♕xf7!

TAL

In the heat of the battle, Black had overlooked this tactical blow. The rook is overloaded; it cannot serve two masters – it is unable to defend the invasion square f7 and the bishop on d8 simultaneously. White wins because he is first to set up a deadly threat. **19 ... ♕a1+** Black takes the game into a hopeless endgame.

Question 57 **Is 19 ... ♖e8 any better?**

After **20 ♔d2 ♖xf7 21 ♘xf7+ ♔g8 22 ♖xa1 ♔xf7 23 ♘e5+ ♔e6 24 ♘xc6 ♘e4+ 25 ♔e3 ♗b6+ 26 ♗d4 Black resigned.**

If you have played through the last two games, it will not be difficult to realise that analytical appraisals of intuitive sacrifices are tough exercises. Perhaps it is because of the sheer complexity of chess, the rapid, ever-changing scene of events, the sudden explosion of combinative ideas or the unforeseen counters of an ingenious opponent. In many cases in chess, the analytical method does not succeed in discovering all the secrets of a position; thus all creative problems may not be forced into the theoretical mould of methodology. Yet even if chess methodology (i.e. the theoretical analysis of positions) does not always produce final answers, it must not be abandoned. We just have to be satisfied with examining the most difficult problems and discussing them to the full. The main point of all this is to widen and deepen the range of our knowledge.

Both Players Castle Short

When both sides have castled short, the following conditions must generally be present for the successful completion of an attack:

(1) The position in the centre must be safe, either by the attacker having full control over the middle of the board or because the centre is closed. This condition is necessary so that the attacking operations on the kingside can be carried out unhindered.

(2) There must be material superiority in the critical area.

(3) The attacking forces must exploit possibilities with maximum effect – pieces and pawns have to work together harmoniously. This points to the requirements for successful strategy: the necessary communication must be established – open files and diagonals; strong points for the knights right in the midst of the enemy king's position; square and pawn weaknesses in the opposing camp, and spatial advantage.

(4) The attacker must have a lasting initiative on hand and must be able to conjure up constant threats to the opposing king. This enables him to dictate the attacking tempo, to force his will upon his opponent and thereby to impede or prevent enemy freeing manoeuvres. Learners ought to take good note of these general strategic conditions of an attack. There is one further, more specific point to add.

(5) The attack has to be aimed at a target or weakness in the enemy king position. Here we need to focus our attention upon the position of the pawns which form a protective wall around the king. As each pawn move weakens squares, the strongest pawn formation theoretically is the one in which all the pawns are next to each other on their original squares. Every attacker sets out to weaken or destroy this pawn formation. If this succeeds, then there are gaps through which the attacking pieces can penetrate into the enemy camp. The following game is a good practical example of this procedure.

The Bewitched Square f7

As you will have seen from the previous games, Tal has followed Steinitz' advice about attacking weak, sensitive points. Tal's attention has often been drawn like a magnet towards the square f7 – especially when it has only been guarded by the king. In the following game, the lengthily prepared strategic attack culminates in a devastating sacrifice which opens up the diagonal a2-g8 and gives Black decisive disadvantages.

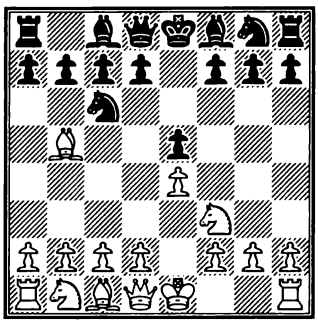
Game No. 25

Tal – Unzicker

Stockholm 1960-61

Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5

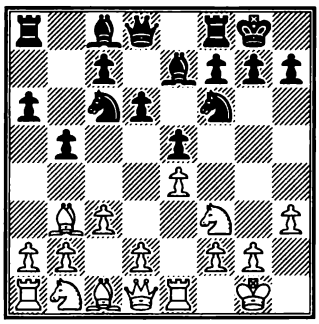


UNZICKER

Position after 3 ♗b5

TAL

So we have the Ruy Lopez – Mikhail Tal's hobby horse. That ingenious player Savielly Tartakower described this opening as the 'Spanish Torture' and he wrote: 'Undoubtedly the Spanish Bishop Ruy Lopez de Segura did not belong to the Inquisition – he merely played chess and even that, as the results of the Madrid Tournament in 1566 show, he did somewhat badly. How is it that his seemingly docile opening, which really contains only one threat which is in fact an error (namely 4 ♗xc6 dxc6 5 ♘xe5? ♕d4) produces such crushing power – that for decades it absolutely monopolized the tournament repertoires and brought fear to all who played with the black pieces? The answer to this question, as you know, is that of all the "open" games, the Ruy Lopez conceals its strategic aim and in conjunction with this it maintains the tension on both sides of the board.' Although the Ruy Lopez usually begins quietly, Black is, however, often exposed to a long strategic involvement. This is also the case in the game which follows. Tal knows how to strengthen his position gradually and how to unsettle his opponent with constant stiletto-like thrusts. Watch what happens – after a peaceful preparatory period, the position suddenly becomes ripe for a combinative sacrifice. **3 ... a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3**



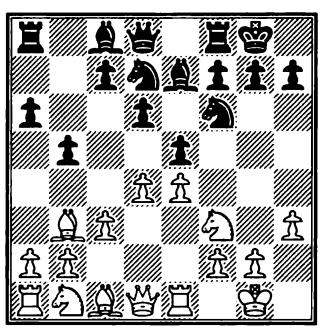
UNZICKER

Position after 9 h3

TAL

9 ... ♘b8

At first glance, this contravenes the principles of development; the knight loses a tempo, in order to return to its original square, whilst White immediately advances energetically in the centre – yet the retreat is a positional manoeuvre! In this specific situation it is important to advance the c-pawn, which had been hindered by the knight on c6. After the further ... ♘bd7, the queen's knight will control the important square c5. **10 d4 ♘bd7**



UNZICKER

Position after 10 ... ♘bd7

TAL

The queen's bishop is blocked by this move, but that is not tragic in this position because the square b7 beckons. **11 c4** This frees c3, the most favourable square for the queen's knight. The king's knight used to be advanced immediately to f5 via h4. The most simple defence against 11 ♘h4 consists in 11 ... ♘b6 12 ♘f5 ♗xf5 13 exf5 exd4 14 cxd4 and then the positional advance ... c5, since 11 ... ♘xe4 12 ♘f5! is risky for Black. **11 ... c6 12 c5!** The base of the opposing pawn centre is rammed! **12 ... ♕c7 13 cxd6 ♗xd6** Now it is your move!

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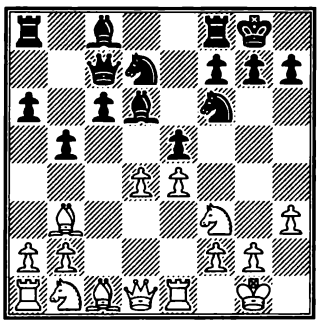


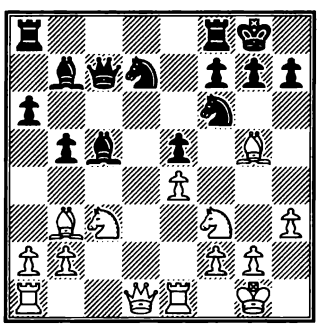
UNZICKER

Position after 13 ... ♗xd6

TAL

14 ♗g5!

White sets up a strategic threat: 15 dxe5 when Black has either to give up his bishop pair after 15 ... ♗xe5 16 ♘xe5 or to accept a weakening of his king's position by 15 ... ♘xe5 16 ♗xf6 etc. **14 ... c5** This indeed stabilises the pawn position in the centre but weakens Black's d5. White's strategy must now be geared to exploiting this as quickly as possible. Two years later, in Los Angeles, Petrosian played the correct defence against Gligoric. This is typical of modern chess in which general positional considerations are subjected to concrete analysis of each position. After 14 ... exd4 15 ♗xf6 gxf6! Black calmly accepts the weakening of his kingside, as after 16 ♘xd4 ♘c5 17 ♘f5 ♗xf5 18 exf5 ♖ad8 19 ♕h5 ♗e5 20 ♘c3 ♖d4 the active placing of Black's pieces fully compensates for the pawn weaknesses. **15 dxc5 ♗xc5 16 ♘c3 ♗b7**



UNZICKER

Position after 16 ... ♗b7

TAL

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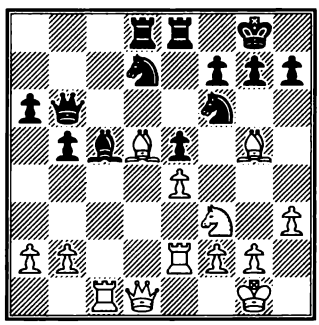
17 ♖c1!

This pins the bishop after the knight on c3 moves away and also prepares active positions for the rooks. Would it not have been better to occupy d5 immediately by 17 ♘d5? Answer: No! Tal was not happy that after 17 ... ♘xd5 18 ♗xd5 ♘b6 19 ♗xb7 ♕xb7 20 ♘xe5 f6 21 ♘d3 ♗xf2+ 22 ♘xf2 fxg5 the active positions of Black's pieces counterbalance the loss of the pawn. **17 ... ♕b6 18 ♖e2!** This not only defends White's Achilles' heel on f2, but also threatens to increase the pressure on the open c-file. **18 ... ♖fe8** Carefully protecting the king pawn, because 19 ♗xf6 was threatened. Until now White has followed the usual strategic plan of placing his pieces in the most favourable way possible. Yet after Black's rook move he concentrates on specific tactical ideas to exploit the weakness on Black's f7. **19 ♘d5! ♗xd5 20 ♗xd5 ♖ad8** What would you play now?



UNZICKER

Position after 20 ... ♖ad8

TAL

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21 ♖ec2! ♗e7 22 ♖c6

Quite suddenly the position has completely changed. White has really succeeded in increasing the pressure.

22 ... ♕a5 If 22 ... ♕b8 23 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 White could simply play 24 ♖xa6.

Question 58 **And what if 23 ... ♘xf6 here?**

23 ♗d2!

This vacates the square g5 for the knight with a gain of tempo – we saw this same idea in the game against Smyslov. **23 ... b4**

* * * * * *

24 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 25 ♕b3+ Resigns.

Correct or Incorrect? That is the Question

The same theme appears in the following game. Regardless of the fact that the rook on Black's f8 seems to protect f7 adequately enough, White gives up two minor pieces so that he can lure out the enemy king on to the exposed diagonal a2-f7. However, unlike the previous example, the immediate decisive threat is not present here. Black seems to have sufficient defensive possibilities and the game seems to hang upon the infamous silk thread – yet Tal still decides to sacrifice!

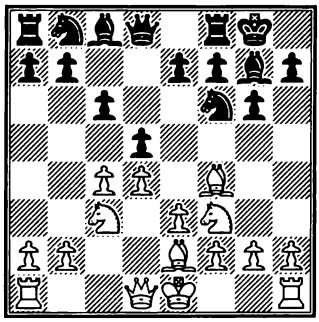
Game No. 26

Tal – Johannessen

Riga 1959

Slav Defence

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 c6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 ♘f3 g6 5 ♗f4 ♗g7 6 e3 0-0 7 ♗e2

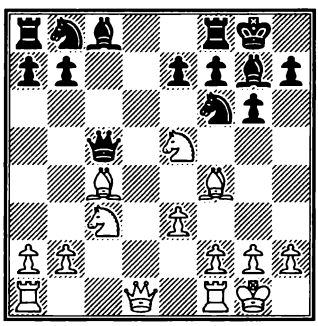


JOHANNESSEN

Position after 7 ♗e2

TAL

The so-called Schlechter defence. Black has a solid set-up, but his position has a fundamental weakness; the bishop on g7 cannot effectively influence the centre because the strongly fortified wall of pawns is like granite. In such positions, one tries to undermine the solid pawn formation by advancing pawns on the flank, thus Black plays the move which follows, even though it loses a tempo. **7 ... c5 8 dxc5 ♕a5 9 0-0 dxc4 10 ♗xc4 ♕xc5 11 ♘e5**



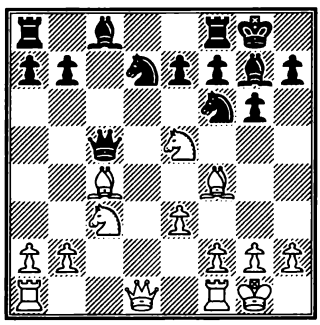
JOHANNESSEN

Position after 11 ♘e5

TAL

Here, Keres wrote, 'scarcely any other master would have made this move, as after Black's reply White seems forced to exchange the knight which leads to simplification. They would have played the simple continuation 11 ♗b3. Tal has other ideas! He has already seen the complications which proved too difficult for his young opponent to handle.' Let us see, though, what Tal had to say about this position, 'At first glance the knight move looks ridiculous. Surely White does not intend to sacrifice on f7? Indeed, if it were White to move in this position, the sacrifice would achieve nothing. However, it is now Black to move, and he has to worsen his position with his reply. After the straightforward 11 ♗b3, Black would have an easy game with 11 ... ♘c6.'

11 ... ♘bd7 Black ought to have played 11 ... ♘c6. However, he feared the isolated pawn which he would get after 12 ♘a4 ♕a5 13 ♘xc6 bxc6. Yet after 14 ♕e2 ♘d5 the active fianchettoed bishop fully compensates for this disadvantage. Black's idea represents a common mistake which chess players make. Choice of move is determined by our aversion to a future static weakness – we do not want even to consider a positional concession, and neither are we prepared to engross ourselves in the position and make a more specific examination of its inner dynamics. Now it is your turn again.



JOHANNESSEN

Position after 11 ... ♘bd7

TAL

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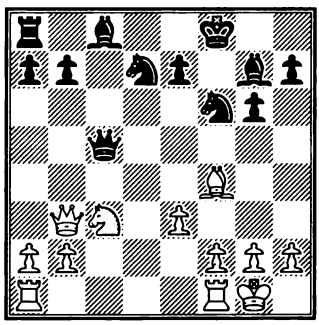
12 ♗xf7+!?

'It is difficult to conclude that the sacrifice is completely correct. White has no tangible threats, and Black is easily ahead in material. Yet Johannessen has a difficult problem to solve – the development of his queenside' (Keres).

Tal, however, says, 'I disagree! In my opinion such sacrifices do not require specific calculation. It just needs one look at the position to convince yourself that the sacrifice must be right! After a few moves we see that White's pieces are ideally placed, whilst the black queenside is still sleeping peacefully. For the present, the black rook on a8 and the bishop on c8 are excluded from the fight.'

Rudolf Spielmann, the king of the intuitive sacrifice, observed that it is basically wrong to expect to be able to calculate everything when

sacrificing in this way, 'one must only have faith in the position, and faith in oneself (Spielmann). **12 ... ♖xf7 13 ♘xf7 ♔xf7 14 ♕b3+ ♔f8**



JOHANNESSEN

Position after 14 ... ♔f8

TAL

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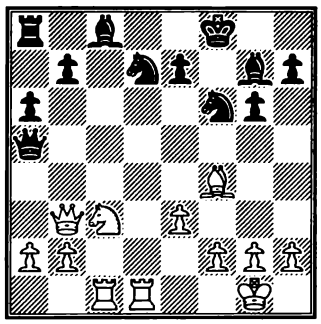
15 ♖ac1!

'Now the threat is 16 ♘b5 ♕b6 17 ♘c7 followed by ♘e6+. After 15 ... e6, 16 ♘b5 would have won by force. With his next move Black intends to get rid of the knight, but the knight covers all directions' (Tal). **15 ... a6** Perhaps better defensive possibilities were offered by 15 ... ♕b6. If so, Tal would have played 16 ♕c4 with a better position.

* * * * * *

16 ♖fd1!

You will have gathered from repeated instances, that Tal's play is characterised by a blend of preparatory positional moves and imaginative combinative sequences. Tal knows how to organise his forces and rarely do pieces stand sad and idle on useless squares (look at the prosaic moves 11 and 15 in the game Tal – Suetin). Now there threatens 17 ♘d5 with the same idea as after 15 ♖ac1. If 16 ... ♕b6 then 17 ♕a3! would be strongest. **16 ... ♕a5**



JOHANNESSEN

Position after 16 ... ♕a5

TAL

Now there is but a single tempo in it! Black has only to play 17 ... ♘c5 and all would be well (see the game Tal – Vasyukov). How ought this threat to be countered?

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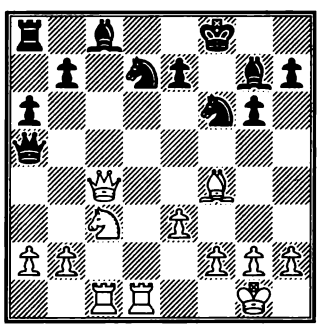
17 ♕c4!

An excellent restraining move! The hallmark of such attacking games consists not only in that the defender constantly has to solve difficult problems but also that the attacker must always concentrate hard on the search for new attacking possibilities.



JOHANNESSEN

Position after 17 ♕c4!

TAL

17 ... ♕f5 Black has no useful move; if 17 ... ♘c5 there follows the natural 18 b4; if 17 ... ♘e5 or 17 ... ♘b6 18 ♖d8+ (resulting from 16 ♖fd1!); if 17 ... b5 18 ♕c6. **18 h3** The black queen is granted no easy life on f5. Black has to contend with the threat of g4. White has succeeded,

by his policy of constant harassment, to keep Black's queenside in restraint. **18 ... ♘e8 19 ♘d5 ♕e6**

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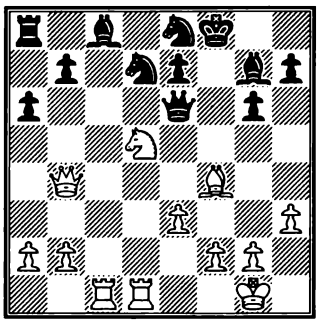
20 ♕b4!



JOHANNESSEN

Position after 20 ♕b4!

TAL

20 ... b5

Question 59 **Keres recommended 20 ... ♗e5. What do you think?**

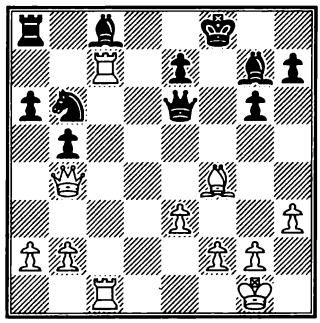
Black wanted to prepare 21 ... ♗b7! with the text move and after 21 ♘c7 ♘xc7 22 ♖xc7 ♔f7 White would have gained nothing tangible. Yet there is a refutation of the apparently logical text-move. Can you see it?

* * * * * *

21 ♖c6!

A decoy sacrifice! Tal wrote of this move, 'It gains an important tempo. Strange that this combination penetrates just as Black thought he had overcome his difficulties.' Is there perhaps in chess, some kind of inner

justice by which boldness is rewarded? **21 ... ♕f7 22 ♘c7 ♘xc7 23 ♖xc7 ♕e6 24 ♖dc1 ♘b6** If 24 ... ♘e5, the strong move 25 ♕e4! could follow.



JOHANNESSEN

Position after 24 ... ♘b6

TAL

25 ♖xe7! ♘d5 If 25 ... ♕xe7, the queen would be lured into a pin after 26 ♗d6. **26 ♖xe6+ ♘xb4 27 ♗d6+ Resigns.**

If 27 ... ♔f7 White gives an intervening check on e7.

Preventing Simplification

In the following game Black selects a quiet variation which aims to simplify the position. In order to prevent the play becoming level and to seize the initiative, White makes an intuitive sacrifice on f7. If, like Tal, one considers equalizing simplification to be trouble, then the sacrifice was born out of necessity – Tal makes a virtue out of that necessity.

The game illustrates that a victory does not just emerge from a position like some abstract event. Behind the tumult of the battle there is a human being with his strengths and weaknesses. There is a psychological reason for Tal's bold play – Filip is an advocate of strictly logical, quiet play. No wonder that the abrupt twist seems to disconcert him. He then plays haphazardly and at the crucial turning point in the game he breaks under the tension.

Game No. 27

Tal – Filip

Moscow, 1967

Caro-Kann Defence

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 dxe4 4 ♘xe4 ♘d7 5 ♘f3 ♘gf6 6 ♘g3 e6 7 ♗d3 ♗e7 8 ♕e2 c5 9 0-0 0-0 10 ♖d1 cxd4 11 ♘xd4 ♖e8 12 b3 ♕b6 13 ♗b2 ♘f8

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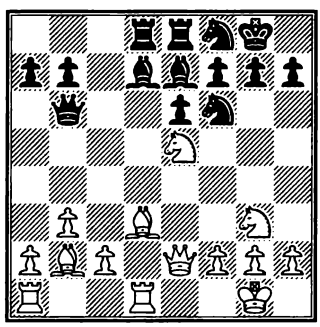
14 ♘f3

The knight immediately heads for an active position on e5. **14 ... ♗d7 15 ♘e5 ♖ad8**



FILIP

Position after 15 ... ♖ad8

TAL

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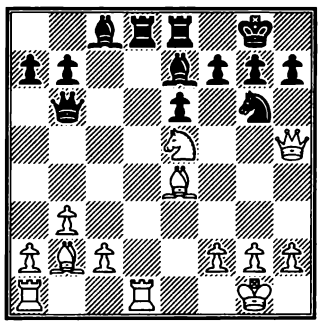
16 ♘e4

Again, quite unobtrusive play. By exchanging the knight, an important defender of the opposing kingside is removed. **16 ... ♘xe4 17 ♗xe4 ♗c8** Black's position is somewhat cramped, but solid. In these types of position, one has to try to force one's opponent to make moves which open up the position. Such a move would be 18 ♕f3, which forces the reply 18 ... f6, but Tal thought that White would achieve nothing tangible from this move. **18 ♕h5!** The prelude to an unclear combination. **18 ... ♘g6**



FILIP

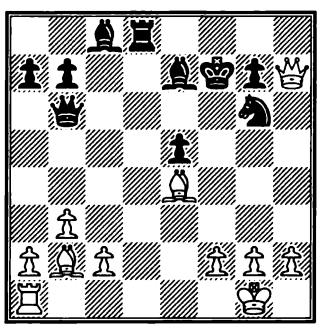
Position after 18 ... ♘g6

TAL

19 ♘xf7!? 'Maybe this sacrifice does not ensure victory for White, but it is clear that only by sacrificing would he be able to exploit his active position, as Black was going to continue with his strategy of simplification. I spent a lot of time deciding whether it was better to break open immediately or to sacrifice after first playing 19 ♖xd8' (Tal).

***Question 60* · What's your opinion?**

19 ... ♔xf7 19 ... ♖xd1+ 20 ♖xd1 ♖f8 would be mistaken because of the intervening move 21 ♗d4. **20 ♕xh7 e5 21 ♖xd8 ♖xd8**



FILIP

Position after 21 ... ♖xd8

TAL

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22 ♕h5!

This is the point of the combination. This pin is very unpleasant (pins usually are!) and Black has no easy way to free himself. **22 ... ♕e6**

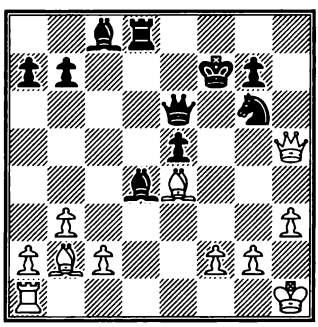
Intending to play ♕g4, to remove the pin; counterattack is also a means of defence and as with every attack it should be directed against the weakest point in the opposing position. In the present position this is clearly the white pawn on f2! Therefore 22 ... ♖d7! was called for. White had also to reckon with 22 ... ♕f6. Which variations would ensue from these moves?

* * * * * *

If 22 ... ♖d2! Tal gives the following line: 23 ♖f1 ♗c5 24 ♗c3 (White gets nothing after 24 ♔h1 ♖xf2 25 ♖xf2+ ♗xf2 26 ♗d5+ ♔e7!; if 26 ... ♗e6 27 ♕f5+) 24 ... ♖xf2 (24 ... ♗xf2+? 25 ♔h1!) 25 ♕xg6+ ♕xg6 26 ♗xg6+ ♔xg6 27 ♖xf2 with advantage to White, but after 27 ... ♗f5 the opposite-coloured bishops herald the draw. If, however, 22 ... ♕f6 Tal would have played 23 f4! ♖h8 24 ♗xg6+ ♔g8 25 ♕xe5 or 23 ... ♗c5+ 24 ♔h1 ♖h8 25 ♗xg6+ ♔g8 26 ♕g5. **23 h3** Preventing the exchange of queens. **23 ... ♗c5**

Question 61 **What could follow after 23 ... ♖d6 24 ♖e1 ♔f8 ?**

24 ♔h1! ♗d4 'If 24 ... ♖d6, then 25 f4 exf4 26 ♕xc5 ♕xe4 27 ♕xd6 ♗xh3 would be unclear. But after 25 ♖e1 ♗d4 26 ♗a3 or 26 c3 White maintains the initiative' (Tal).



FILIP

Position after 24 ... ♗d4

TAL

* * * * * *

25 ♖d1!

Black had underestimated the power of this move. **25 ... ♖d6** 'If 25 ... ♖h8, then 26 ♗xg6+ ♔g8 27 ♕g5 and the sacrifice on h3 for Black

is not enough. Most energetic after 25 ... ♗b6 would be 26 ♖xd8 ♗xd8 27 f4 (Tal). **26 ♗a3 ♖a6 27 ♖xd4! Black resigned**, for if 27 ... exd4 there follows 28 ♗d5 ♖xa3 29 ♕f5+.

As a postscript to this game, I wrote in my book on Chess Tactics, 'This game illustrates Tal's favourite weapon. When a position threatens to become dead, he brings it to life by sacrificing intuitively, thereby complicating it and forcing his opponent to solve difficult defensive problems ... If the intuitive sacrifice exposes the enemy king and the attackers' remaining pieces are positioned so as to capitalise upon the king's weak position, then the intuitive sacrifice can be a very profitable weapon, no matter how double-edged it may seem at first glance. It is also clear that the weaker the position of the king under attack, the greater the material sacrifice may be.'

Explosion on g7

The next game contains an extremely instructive battle strategy. Black mistakenly allows his opponent to develop his pieces in active positions and on the strength of this Tal's strategic plan of attack steadily increases in aggressive power through the following stages:

(1) free, harmonious piece formation;

(2) concentration of forces on the kingside;

(3) sacrifice on g7, which weakens Black's kingside and gains an important tempo;

(4) strong combinative blows add to the power of the attack;

(5) a pseudo knight move is refuted;

(6) a fighting queen against two rooks; and finally

(7) an attack with bishops of opposite colours.

Really, one cannot ask for more from one single game.

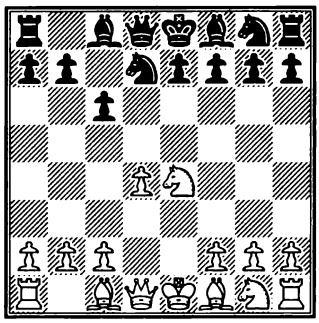
Game No. 28

Tal – Vasyukov

USSR Championship, Kiev 1964-65

Caro-Kann Defence

1 e4 c6 2 ♘c3 d5 3 d4 dxe4 4 ♘xe4 ♘d7



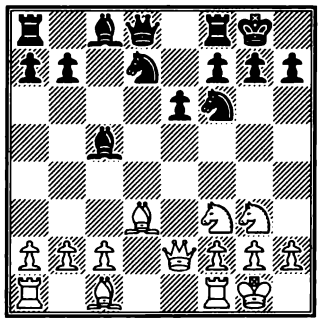
VASYUKOV

Position after 4 ... ♘d7

TAL

5 ♘f3 As we have already seen in the game Tal-Smyslov (No. 24), the popularity of the somewhat passive Caro-Kann grew at the beginning of the sixties. It was believed that by playing this defence one could draw the sting out of an over-zealous attack. So Vasyukov chose this defence too, although it was not a speciality of his and could give him little scope for attacking play. It soon turned out that his choice had not been particularly fortunate. Tal's comment on move 5 is instructive, 'It would have been more fashionable to play 5 ♗c4 ♘gf6 6 ♘g5 e6 7 ♕e2. However, I chose this old, rather forgotten continuation, because not only does one's opponent require exact knowledge but also practical awareness. I knew that my opponent did not possess the latter attribute.'

5 ... ♘gf6 6 ♘g3 e6 7 ♗d3 c5 8 0-0 cxd4 9 ♘xd4 ♗c5 10 ♘f3 This is more logical than the earlier try 10 ♘b3, after which the knight's position on the flank does not enable it to take part in White's main plan, which is to attack the king. **10 ... 0-0 11 ♕e2**



VASYUKOV

Position after 11 ♕e2

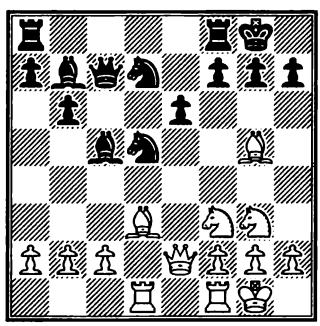
TAL

11 ... b6 Every genuine student of this defence automatically plays 11 ... ♕c7! here, in order to prevent the imminent development of the queen's bishop. **12 ♗f4** Of course! The bishop is quite excellent on this diagonal. **12 ... ♗b7** Apparently logical – but Black ought to have driven away the queen bishop from its active position with 12 ... ♘d5 13 ♗g5 ♕c7. Perhaps he feared 14 ♕e4, but after 14 ... ♘5f6! 15 ♕xa8 ♗b7 the captured rook would be poisoned.

* * * * * *

13 ♖ad1

An elementary developing move? Certainly! Yet how often do we forget such simple moves: how often do we leave the rook standing sadly on its own square! You will soon see that this rook plays an important part in the forthcoming middlegame. **13 ... ♘d5 14 ♗g5 ♕c7**



VASYUKOV

Position after 14 ... ♕c7

TAL

* * * * * *

15 ♘h5!

White is already creating direct threats. What, in your opinion would follow after 15 ... ♖ae8, for example?

(1) Firstly, the knight has to be diverted from the kingside by 16 c4 ♘b4, after which the storm breaks.

(2) Secondly, there comes the devastating sacrifice on h7, which not only weakens the king's position, but also opens the queen's file.

(3) Thirdly, the black knight on d7, which is an important defender of the square f6, is removed by sacrificing the exchange.

(4) Fourthly, two knight moves follow, which gain a tempo and free the square h5 for the queen. One knight is sacrificed, which forces Black to disrupt his pawn structure and creates invasion squares for the attacker.

(5) Finally, the queen and knight combine to produce the inextricable mating net.

General considerations of this kind serve in the minds of chess players as stimuli for concrete tactical ideas. Whilst general considerations of a deductive type predominate in quiet positional situations, they merge with tactical ideas and specific calculations – thus making both deductive and inductive thinking necessary.

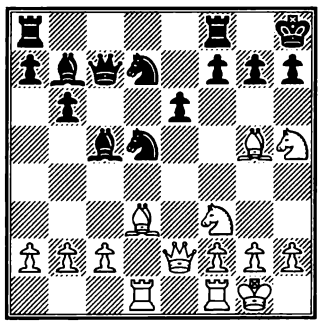
This whole thought process takes place in a split second in the subconscious of a good player.

Question 62 **Now express these general considerations in specific terms, in the language of a concrete variation!**

Finally it is worth noting that instead of 16 ... ♘b4, if 16 ... ♘f6, then after 17 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 18 ♘e5 White would stand excellently – White's pieces threaten the opposing king. Tal remarked on his 15th move, 'the knight move also has its drawbacks: the knight is evidently condemned to death – it has to be sacrificed on g7. Scenting real danger, Black has to rectify his opening mistake by a series of precise moves'.

* * * * * *

15 ... ♔h8!



VASYUKOV

Position after 15 ... ♔h8!

TAL

An excellent defensive move! The bishop sacrifice on h7 would not now give check, so that Black would have a greater choice of defensive moves and after 16 c4 ♘5f6 Black has no need to fear a weakening of his pawn structure by further exchanges on his f6, as he can occupy the open file immediately by playing ... ♖g8. **16 ♗e4** If White tries to get in 16 ♖fe1 first, so that after 16 ... ♖ae8 he can play 17 ♗e4, Black has a strong move at his disposal. Which?

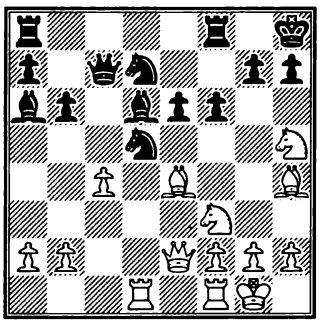
* * * * * *

17 ... f5. This does make a positional concession, as it weaken's Black's e6, but the weakness is difficult to exploit. It is more important here to neutralise the effect that the bishop would have on the b1-h7 diagonal.

Once the white bishop concedes the square e4, then the strong position of Black's knight on d5 and the bishop threat on the long diagonal would give enough compensation for the weakness on e6. Of course, in doing this, Black has to make an accurate assessment of an exchange resulting in queen versus rook and knight. After 18 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 19 ♖xd5 exd5 20 ♕xe8 ♖xe8 21 ♖xe8+ ♘f8 he would have nothing to fear, as the king's position remains solid. **16 ... f6!** Granted, this weakens the e-pawn, but Black wants to make his g7 safe after moving the knight from d7. Tal's analysis showed that 16 ... f5 would fail to 17 ♗xd5 ♗xd5 18 ♘f4 ♗c4 and then the decoy19 ♖xd7! wins. **17 ♗h4** White may not capture a pawn here by 17 ♗f4 ♘xf4 18 ♘xf4 ♕xf4 19 ♗xb7 ♖ad8 20 ♕xe6 ♘e5! and

White's positional advantage has disappeared. For example, 21 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 22 ♘xe5 would fail to 22 ... ♕xf2+.

17 ... ♗d6! If Black can now get in ... ♘c5 he will take over the initiative, so White decides to use extreme measures! **18 c4 ♗a6**



VASYUKOV

Position after 18 ... ♗a6

TAL

How should White continue the attack? 19 ♖c1 would not be right, because the pin on the diagonal would remain. The removal of the pin with the immediate 19 ♗d3 could be met by 19 ... ♘f4 20 ♘xf4 ♗xf4 21 ♕xe6 ♘c5 followed by ... ♘xd3 and ... ♗xc4. The pin may also be taken off by sacrificing on h7 and bringing the black king out, 19 ♗xh7 ♔xh7 20 ♕e4+ ♔h8! 21 ♕xe6 ♗xc4, but after this Black has nothing to fear. So what was Tal's next move?

* * * * * *

19 ♘xg7!

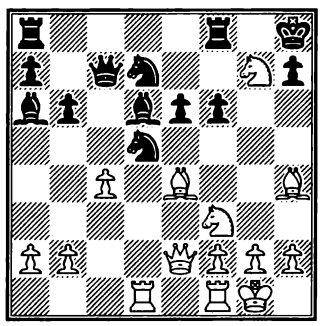
As was already outlined in the introductory remarks, this blow not only weakens the king's position, but also gains an attacking tempo which White uses to activate his pieces.

We should like to take the opportunity to comment on the intrinsic relationship between force and time in sacrificial play because, in the long run, gain in initiative is based on sacrifice. V.Vukovic wrote instructively on this theme in his book on sacrifices, 'It will now be shown how sacrifice is related to time in chess, or in other words, how the player who sacrifices produces certain desired consequences. Every chess player knows how this works – it is the degree of compulsion which one's moves possess to restrict one's opponent's choice.

'Compulsion enters into chess at different levels. There are some moves which give an opponent full freedom of choice, others which restrict that choice and finally moves which permit him only one reply. In combinative and sacrificial play, forcing moves form the essence of the whole operation, because one could certainly not go in for combinations if one's opponent were to have too great a freedom of choice in his counter-moves. It is only in terms of a positional sacrifice that this choice may seem somewhat greater – yet, in the last analysis, in this case too its restriction is more lasting than it first appears.

The restrictive effect of forcing moves stems as a rule from the threat which they pose. An opponent who has to ward off a threat is, in this sense, under compulsion. On the other hand, the absence of compulsion or threat on the part of the player who is to move, grants him temporary freedom. This freedom may be termed "tempo". The player who is able to set up tangible threats maintains the tempo; the one who has to parry the opposing threats usually loses the tempo.

'One may conclude from these considerations that it is unwise to go in for a combination when one does not possess a tempo. Only if one can answer an opponent's threat with an even stronger one do we meet the important idea of regaining the tempo, which as a rule involves a counter sacrifice.'

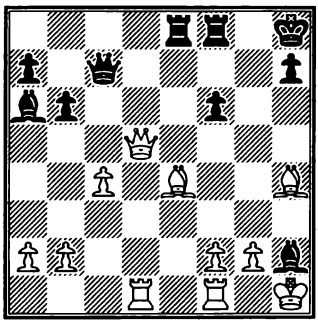


VASYUKOV

Position after 19 ♘xg7!

TAL

The diagrammed position is an excellent illustration of Vukovic's ideas. By sacrificing, White succeeds. **19 ... ♔xg7** 19 ... ♘f4 is not playable because of 20 ♕d2 with devastating pressure on the queen's file. **20 ♘d4** Winning an important tempo and opening the way for the queen to go to g4. **20 ... ♘c5 21 ♕g4+ ♔h8 22 ♘xe6 ♘xe6 23 ♕xe6 ♖ae8 24 ♕xd5 ♗xh2+ 25 ♔h1**



VASYUKOV

Position after 25 ♔h1

TAL

This position is forced after the sacrifice on g7. Black cannot now play 25 ... ♗xc4, because of 26 ♕f5 with the double threat of ♖d7 and ♗xf6+. He ought, however, to have chosen the accepted defensive method, simplification into a clear endgame position by 25 ... ♕xc4 26 ♕xc4 ♗xc4 27 ♖fe1. The endgame seems to be somewhat more comfortable for White, but it smacks of a draw' (Tal). In the game itself, Black is tempted to play actively and this proves to be fatal. **25 ... ♕f4** It looks very convincing. Black attacks both of his opponent's proud bishops! Yet it is psychologically dangerous for the player to focus upon the immediate glitter of such obvious threatening moves, because all that glitters is not gold! What should White reply?

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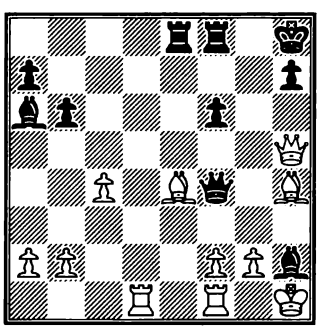
26 ♕h5!

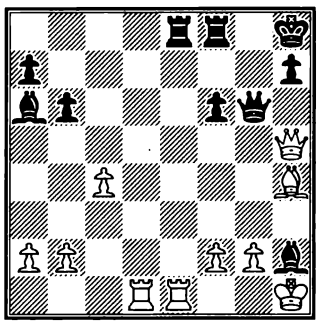


VASYUKOV

Position after 26 ♕h5!

TAL

Vasyukov had overlooked this simple, but strong move. Now 26 ... ♖xe4 fails to 27 ♖d7 with a crushing invasion of the seventh rank. So the queen captures on e4. **26 ... ♕xe4 27 ♖fe1** Even players like Tal can sometimes fall victim to routine. The move is understandable; why not bring the idle rook on f1 into play? As you will see, 27 ♖de1 should have been played. The text move leads to an oversight by both players. **27 ... ♕g6**



VASYUKOV

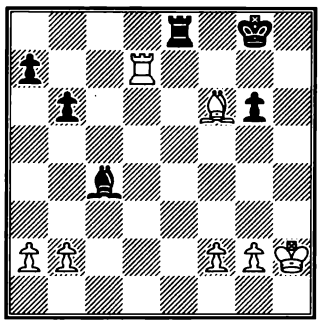
Position after 27 ... ♕g6

TAL

Let us hear what Tal has to say, again, 'In view of the weakened king position, Black avoids the exchange of queen versus two rooks. When I originally visualised this position, I had planned 28 ♗xf6+ ♕xf6 (weaker would be 28 ... ♔g8 29 ♕d5+ ♕f7 30 ♖xe8 ♖xe8 31 ♔xh2) 29 ♖xe8. However, on re-checking the variation I realised that Black's position would be defensible after ... '.

Question 63 **Well, what had Tal first missed?**

'But my opponent, who was in time trouble, feared 28 ♗xf6+, when I resigned myself to playing **28 ♕xg6** The overjoyed Vasyukov rapidly replied **28 ... hxg6?** Of course the intervening check 28 ... ♖xe1+ gave him the draw' (Tal). These wretched intervening moves! How often have they made a mockery of the most beautiful of sacrificial combinations! The attacker overlooks these sudden moves which interrupt his seemingly forced sequence. Of course intervening moves can also destroy the best-laid defensive plans. **29 ♗xf6+ ♔g8 30 ♖xe8 ♖xe8 31 ♔xh2 ♗xc4 32 ♖d7**



VASYUKOV

Position after 32 ♖d7

TAL

The endgame is won for White for the following reasons:

(1) He has the active rook.

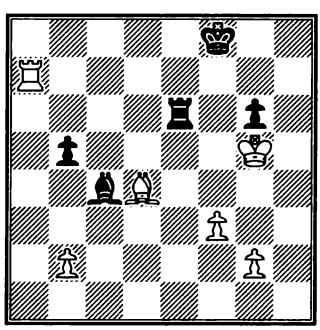
(2) The fact that there are bishops of opposite colours means that Black cannot weaken or divert the pressure of the white bishop on the dark squares.

(3) The white king can take an active part in strengthening the attack. It is accepted that in the endgame kings can and indeed ought to become more active as they need have no fear of mate in the simplified positions that arise.

(4) The decisive factor is that not only is White up in material, but also his pieces combine harmoniously and actively.

(5) Meanwhile the defender has no active counter-plan at his disposal, and passive play is surely the harbinger of every defeat.

The rest is easy to understand, but instructive. **32 ... ♖e6! 33 ♗c3 ♗xa2 34 ♖xa7 ♗c4 35 ♔g3 ♗d5 36 f3 ♔f8 37 ♗d4 b5 38 ♔f4 ♗c4 39 ♔g5**



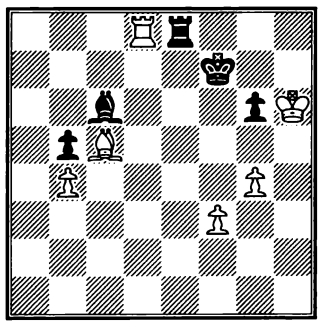
VASYUKOV

Position after 39 ♔g5

TAL

Look at how the white king strolls cheekily about on the black squares!

39 ... ♔e8 40 ♖a8+ ♔f7 41 ♖a7+ ♔e8 42 b4 ♗d5 43 ♖a3 ♔f7 44 g4 ♖e2 45 ♗c5 ♖e5+ 46 ♔h6 ♖e6 47 ♖d3 ♗c6 48 ♖d8 ♖e8



VASYUKOV

Position after 48 ... ♖e8

TAL

49 ♖d4! (Usually it is best to avoid exchanging rooks when there are bishops of opposite colours.) For example, here White could indeed push his f-pawn to f6, but the black king on e8 and the bishop on c4 would prevent any further advance, whilst the impotent black-squared bishop could only watch angrily. **49 ... ♖e6 50 f4 ♔e8 51 ♔g7 ♗e4 52 ♗b6! ♗f3 53 ♖d8+ ♔e7 54 ♖d3 ♗e2 55 ♗d8+ ♔e8 56 ♖d2 ♖e3 57 ♗g5 ♗d3 58 f5 Resigns**.

The Problem of the Spanish Bishop

One of the most important problems in the Ruy Lopez is how to involve the 'Spanish' bishop in the proceedings. Of course, this problem cannot be treated in isolation, but must be considered in conjunction with the other pieces and pawns. The pawns in the centre play a significant part in this – do they block the bishop's diagonal to the enemy kingside, or do these lines remain open? At any rate, one can safely say that the Spanish bishop's freedom of action is an important element in the development of the attack on the king. The following game illustrates the problems which one has in activating this piece.

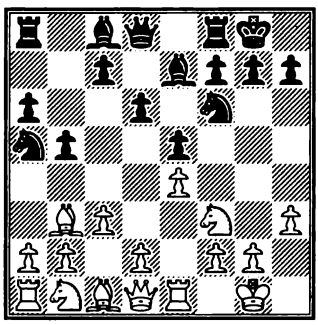
Game No. 29

Tal – Holmov

Moscow 1969

Ruy Lopez

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♘a5



HOLMOV

Position after 9 ... ♘a5

TAL

This move begins the defensive system of the Russian grandmaster Mikhail Chigorin, the founder of the Soviet School of Chess. His historical merit consists in the fact that he championed the fight against dogmatic application of principles. When a move aims at specific tactical or strategic goals, its execution should not be prevented by clinging to dogmatic generalisations.

A typical example in support of Chigorin's viewpoint is the text move, which has proved trustworthy now for over ninety years – his contemporaries thought it bad to put a knight at the side of the board. In fact a knight move from c6 to a5 does decrease the number of squares which the knight controls, from eight to four. However, what was once a bold idea is now common knowledge – learned by all chess players early on; the move 9 ... ♘a5 does indeed decrease the potential of the knight, but it pursues a specific strategic aim, which far outweighs this disadvantage:

(1) It drives the Spanish bishop away from its active position on b3. Well placed pieces should be driven away from their vantage points as quickly as possible, even if for the moment they appear to be standing by harmlessly and innocently. Compare the game Tal – Unzicker (No. 25) and

look at the chaos that the bishop can wreak from b3, granted with help from the other pieces.

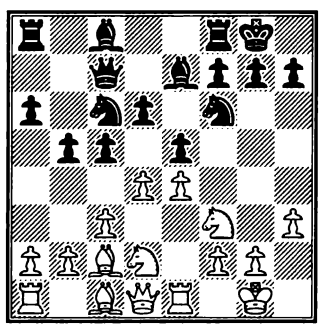
(2) The knight move paves the way for ... c5, which hits at the opposing centre and thereby puts it under pressure.

(3) In a comparatively closed position a loss of tempo is no great misfortune. The knight can move back to c6 after the advance of the c-pawn and then put significant pressure on the enemy centre.

I should like to stress that all chess players require strategic generalisations; they give to the play the first hint of future strategic direction. After each move which illustrates a strategic generalisation, I have tried to explain this generalisation, so that you may be able to understand the principles and enter into the consciousness (maybe even the subconscious!) of the move.

However, woe betide the player who follows theoretical generalisations in an uncritical, routine manner. They are only like a compass which points the way, which helps us to uncover the inner processes of the chess struggle and which simply outlines the pros and cons of a strategic or tactical idea. If we use this compass for the concrete requirements of a specific position, we can gain a creative insight that enables us to penetrate deeply into the secrets of our art and to recognise its beauty in all its splendour. Now back to the game.

10 ♗c2 c5 11 d4 ♕c7 12 ♘bd2 ♘c6



HOLMOV

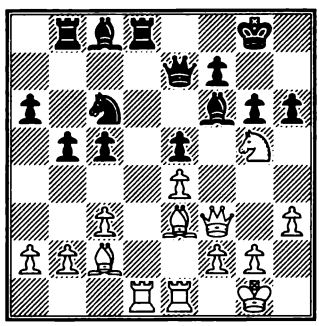
Position after 12 ... ♘c6

TAL

So the knight is put back in its place and, together with the pawn on c5, exerts pressure on the opposing centre. Now we are at the crucial position of Chigorin's system and its problems are typical of those found in all central positions where the tension has not been released. White can now choose from different strategic plans:

(1) **13 dxc5 dxc5** After the exchange the tension is released; both sets of central pawns are blocked and the queen's file is open down the centre. The basic idea of stabilising the centre consists in White's plan to eliminate interference with his own planned operations on the kingside, involving the usual 'Spanish Jump' with the knight from d2 via f1 to e3 or g3 with the eventual occupation of d5 or f5. Here is an example from Tal's games which illustrates the relationship between opening strategy and the consequent middle game; Tal – Averbakh, Riga 1961.

14 ♘f1 ♖d8 (better 14 ... ♗e6 and then ... ♖ad8) **15 ♕e2 g6 16 ♘e3 ♖b8 17 ♘g5! ♗f8 18 ♕f3 ♗g7 19 ♘d5 ♕d6 20 ♗e3 h6 21 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 22 ♖ad1 ♕e7**

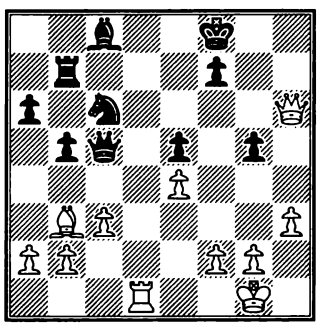


AVERBACH

Position after 22 ... ♕e7

TAL

23 ♗xc5 (decoy!) **23 ... ♖xd1 24 ♖xd1 ♕xc5 25 ♕xf6 hxg5 26 ♗b3!** (the Spanish bishop is suddenly awake and works with devastating power. The double threats of ♕xf7+ and ♕xg6+ can not be parried) **26 ... ♖b7 27 ♕xg6+ ♔f8 28 ♕h6+ Resigns.** Just look why!



AVERBACH

Position after 28 ♕h6+

TAL

* * * * * *

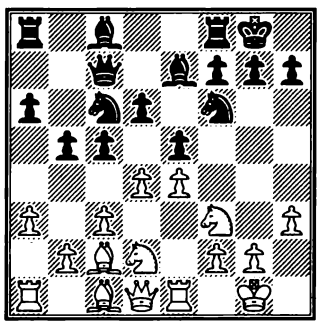
(i) 28 ... ♔g8 is followed by the powerful move 29 ♖d6 with the deadly threat of 30 ♖g6 mate (Black's pinned pawn on f7 cannot protect the invasion square on g6!).

(ii) 28 ... ♔e7 is followed by 29 ♖d5 (diversion from d6) 29 ... ♕b6 30 ♖d6 (pins with a gain of tempo!) 30 ... ♖c7 31 ♕f6+ ♔e8 32 ♖d8+! exploiting the pin on the knight. Not difficult, but still instructive.

(2) 13 d5. This closure is not usually tried in practice. After 13 ... ♘a5 14 b3 ♗d7 15 ♘f1 ♘b7 16 ♘g3 ♖fe8 (perhaps 16 ... a5 is better – Keres) 17 ♘f5 ♗f8 18 ♘h2 ♘d8 19 ♘g4 ♘xg4 20 hxg4 f6 21 ♕e2 ♘f7 and Black holds out.

(3) The third system consists in maintaining the tension in the centre. This was chosen by Tal in our game.

13 a3!

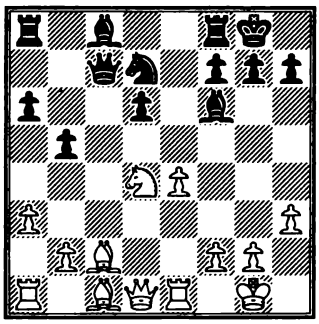


HOLMOV

Position after 13 a3!

TAL

A useful waiting move. The immediate transfer of the knight to the kingside (13 ♘f1) involves an unclear pawn sacrifice 13 ... cxd4 14 cxd4 ♘xd4 15 ♘xd4 exd4 16 ♘g3 ♘d7 17 ♘f5 ♗f6 and White can no longer count on the recapture of the sacrificed pawn. In order to reduce Black's counterplay on the c-file 13 ♗b1 has been tried; however, in doing this, the rook is completely cut off and in effect White has achieved nothing with this move. **13 ... cxd4** Black himself releases the tension. In recapturing the pawn, White will give him time to regroup his pieces. **14 cxd4 exd4 15 ♘b3 ♘d7 16 ♘bxd4 ♘xd4 17 ♘xd4 ♗f6** Black does not fear the weak backward pawn on d6. Firstly, the pawn on d6 is not so easy to capture; secondly, it slows down the advance e4-e5 and thirdly, Black relies on the active positions of his pieces.



HOLMOV

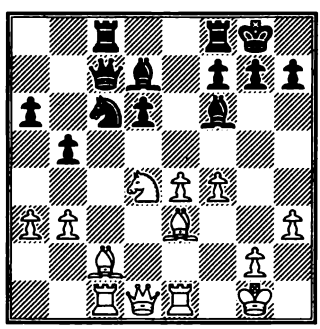
Position after 17 ... ♗f6

TAL

18 ♗e3! The improvement found in home analysis! Against Averbakh in 1968, Tal had played 18 ♖e2 but after 18 ... ♘e5 19 ♗d2 ♗d7 Black held firm. **18 ... ♘e5** The knight's strength is illusory because it can always be driven away with f4. **19 b3 ♗d7 20 ♖c1 ♖ac8** He underestimates (or overlooks) the possibility of the pin and the consequent breakthrough. Clearly 20 ... ♕a5 ought to have been played. How should the game now continue?

* * * * * *

21 f4 ♘c6



HOLMOV

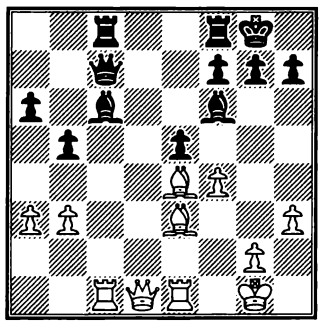
Position after 21 ... ♘c6

TAL

* * * * * *

22 e5!

Not only does this open the long-awaited diagonal for the bishop, but it also vacates e4 for a pinning move. **22 ... dxe5 23 ♘xc6 ♗xc6 24 ♗e4!**



HOLMOV

Position after 24 ♗e4!

TAL

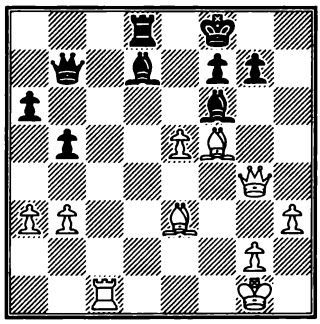
24 ... ♖fd8

Question 64 **Ought Black to have tried to release the pin by 24 ... ♕b7 ?**

25 ♕g4 ♗d7

* * * * * *

Once again 25 ... ♕b7 is not on, because of 26 ♖xc6!! This unpinning manoeuvre, however, leads to a weakening of the kingside. White is operating simultaneously on three fronts; on the queenside, in the centre and now on the kingside. **26 ♗xh7+** The bishop rejoices in being able to play his part in the victory. Emanuel Lasker once wrote in his book, 'The Aesthetics of Chess', that the vocabulary of the chess pieces is not so limited as one might think; pride – in the fulfilment of work: anger – if this fulfilment is denied; despair – as a result of cruel fate; jubilation – thanks to a piece of good luck; hatred – against anyone who seriously threatens the king!; laughter – at escaping from a trap. **26 ... ♔f8** Of course not 27 ... ♔xh7 because of 28 ♕h5+ (attacking with a tempo) followed by ♖xc7. **27 ♗f5** Tal thinks that 27 ♕h5 would have been stronger. **27 ... ♕b7 28 fxe5 ♖xc1 29 ♖xc1**



HOLMOV

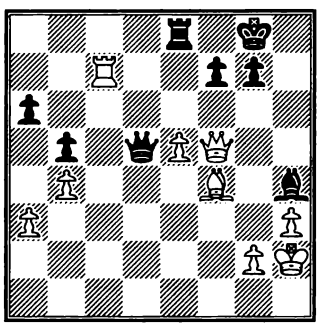
Position after 29 ♖xc1

TAL

29 ... ♗xf5

Question 65 **What does White play after 29 ... ♗xe5 ?**

30 ♕xf5 ♕d5 A counter pin! **31 ♗f4 ♔g8 32 b4 ♗h4 33 ♔h2 ♖e8 34 ♖c7**



HOLMOV

Position after 34 ♖c7

TAL

34 ... ♗f2 This breaks the cast-iron rule in defence – that in critical positions one has to create as many technical difficulties as possible for one's opponent. After 34 ... ♕e6 35 ♕e4 ♗f6 Black had definite drawing chances because it would not be so easy to capitalise upon the material advantage. By playing the text move, Black wanted to avoid 35 ♖d7 but now White can exploit the fact that the bishop is unprotected on f2. How do you think he does this?

* * * * * *

35 ♖c8!

This simple, but shrewd move can be easily missed by a battle-weary opponent (and the defender usually tires the more quickly!) **35 ... ♖f8** After 35 ... ♖xc8 36 ♕xc8+ ♔h7 there follows 37 ♕c2+ which attacks the bishop as well. **36 ♗g5!** This is the point! If 36 ... ♗b6 37 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 there follows 38 ♕c8+, so **Black resigned**.

Vertical, Horizontal, Diagonal!

In the next game White's final attack is most effective – one after another, three devastating sacrifices burst upon the enemy king position. Tal's build-up is particularly instructive and valuable in terms of chess methodology. As may be seen in this game, the positional basis of the kingside attack is a consequence of the situation in the centre. This is especially true of fixed central pawn formations, which determine the battle area and the choice of plans. We have already seen that an attack on the king is only successful if the active side is able to attack with superior force. Yet if the opponent is not so friendly and accommodating as to voluntarily weaken his kingside by moving his defensive pieces away, then the attacker's problem is to force such weaknesses upon him.

Typical positions of this type are those in which the central pawn structure is such that a pawn has crossed the demarcation line to e5. In strategic terms this usually means that the trusty guard on Black's f6 is driven away and the king has to assume sole responsibility for the defence of his own wing. If, in addition, the attacker has fulfilled the further positional condition of getting his pieces into the critical area, then the storm can break loose.

As a rule, such outposts on e5 are established in the following two ways:

(1) From the opening, the more active side succeeds in building up a mobile pawn centre from which the demarcation line may be crossed at the appropriate time. Here is a typical example of this, from a simultaneous display: 1 d4 d5 2 c4 ♘f6? 3 cxd5 ♘xd5 4 ♘f3 e6 5 e4 ♘f6 6 ♗d3 ♗b4+

7 ♘c3 b6 8 0-0 ♗b7 9 ♕e2 0-0 10 e5 ♘d5 11 ♗xh7+! ♔xh7 12 ♘g5+ ♔g8 13 ♕h5 ♖e8 14 ♕xf7+ ♔h8 15 ♕h5+ ♔g8 16 ♕h7+ ♔f8 17 ♕h8+ ♔e7 18 ♕xg7 mate.

It is instructive to observe the close relationship between strategy and tactics, even though it is a poor game. In concrete terms, the strategic advance of the pawn to e5 enabled White to drive Black's knight away from his f6 and induced the subsequent disaster.

(2) An active piece on e5 is exchanged and is replaced by a decisive little pawn, after which Black's knight on f6 has to move again and this acts as an incentive for White to attack.

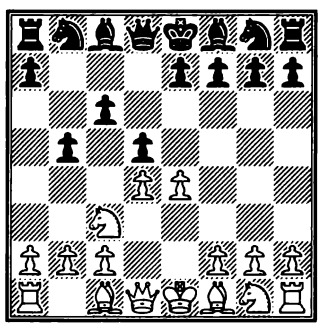
Game No. 30

Tal – Gurgenidze

USSR Championship, Alma-Ata 1969

Caro-Kann Defence

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 b5!?



GURGENIDZE

Position after 3 ... b5!?

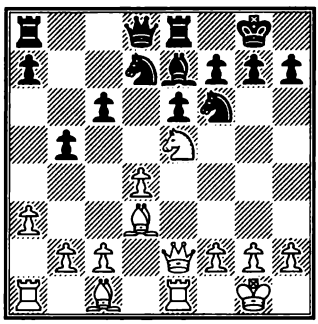
TAL

The Georgian grandmaster tends towards originality in the opening – he avoids well documented theory. It is a matter of taste – sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. The advantage of such tactics is that the opponent is forced to solve problems over the board: the disadvantage, that Gurgenidze's ideas are often somewhat bizarre from a strictly positional point of view.

4 a3 If 4 e5, Gurgenidze suggests 4 ... a5!?

4 ... dxe4 Now Black transposes into the usual line. The black pawn on b5 is not especially effective – and is it really worth committing a pawn like this at such an early stage, without getting some kind of advantage from it?

5 ♘xe4 ♗f5 6 ♗d3 ♗xe4 It would have been dangerous to accept the pawn by playing 6 ... ♕xd4 7 ♘f3 ♕d8 8 ♕e2. **7 ♗xe4 ♘f6**

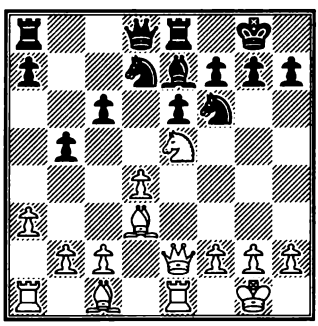


GURGENIDZE

Position after 7 ... ♘f6

TAL

8 ♗d3 8 ♗f3 seems more logical, but Tal did not like the fact that after Black's set up of ... e6, ... ♗d6, ... ♕c7, ... 0-0 and then ... e5 the pressure of the bishop on the diagonal h1-a8 would have been practically meaningless. **8 ... e6** Again Black could capture on d4. Tal considered that he would get a definite initiative for the pawn, but even he was doubtful as to whether this compensation would be enough. Gurgenidze's rejection of the pawn stems from a personal preference – he does not like to burden himself with troublesome defence for the sake of a small material advantage. **9 ♘f3 ♗e7 10 ♕e2 ♘bd7 11 0-0 0-0 12 ♖e1 ♖e8 13 ♘e5!**

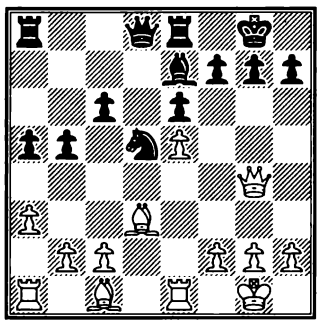


GURGENIDZE

Position after 13 ♘e5!

TAL

Already, the drawback to the move 3 ... b5 appears. Because of the immediate threat on the pawn on c6, Black cannot play his intended ... ♘f8, and if 13 ... ♕c7 14 ♘xf7 looks too dangerous. **13 ... ♘xe5 14 dxe5 ♘d5** After 14 ... ♘d7 the disadvantage of ... b5 would again be exposed, by 15 ♕e4 with a double attack on c6 and h7. The pawn on e5 has done its evil work – the king's knight has had to abandon its defensive post. Now it becomes a matter of making the fullest use of this position and preparing the attack. Yet, in doing this, White should not underestimate his opponent's strong centralised knight. **15 ♕g4** Of course! The queen does not wait to be asked twice! **15 ... a5**



GURGENIDZE

Position after 15 ... a5

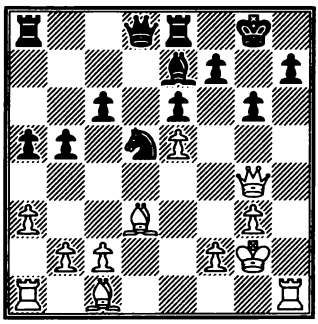
TAL

In order to meet 16 b3 with ... a4. However, Tal demonstrates that his opponent has underestimated the kingside threats. How should White continue?

* * * * * *

16 h4!

The idea of this move is to weaken the pawns on the kingside after h5-h6 or ♗h6. Black is practically forced to accept the sacrifice, but this opens a crucial line of attack for Tal. **16 ... ♗xh4 17 g3 ♗e7 18 ♔g2 g6** When defending, one should not give the slightest concession to one's opponent. Considering this, it would have been preferable to play 18 ... ♗f8 aiming at ... f5. However, after 19 ♖h1 f5 20 ♕h5 h6 21 ♕g6 there are insuperable defensive difficulties, as ♗xh6 is threatened and if 21 ... ♔h8 there follows 22 ♗xh6 gxh6 23 ♖xh6+ ♗xh6 24 ♖h1. **19 ♖h1**



GURGENIDZE

Position after 19 ♖h1

TAL

White now has a strong initiative.

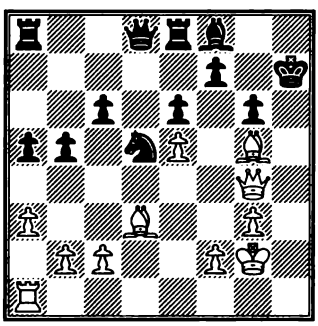
Question 66 **What is his immediate threat?**

19 ... ♗f8

* * * * * *

20 ♗g5!

A highly important and necessary 'zwischenzug'! Yet couldn't White first play 20 ♖xh7, in order to gain a tempo after 20 ... ♔xh7 with 21 ♗g5? The answer to this question demonstrates that a successful attack often depends upon finding the correct move order. Can you discover why?



GURGENIDZE

Position after 20 ♗g5!

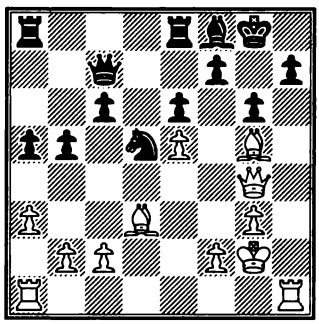
TAL

* * * * * *

On this Tal gives the following line: 21 ... ♘e3+ 22 fxe3 ♕d5+ 23 ♗e4 ♕xe5 24 ♕h4+ ♔g8 and now 25 ♗f6 does not finish it because of 25 ... ♕h5, whilst if 25 ♖h1 ♗g7 holds the position. If, instead of 22 fxe3, White plays 22 ♗xe3 there follows 22 ... ♗g7 23 ♖h1+ ♔g8 24 ♕h3 ♕e7. So, you see, the attacker has to play accurately all the time, so as not to overlook the slightest defensive chances on the part of the defender.
20 ... ♕c7

> ***Question 67*** **Consider the alternatives (1) 20 ... ♗e7 and (2) 20 ... ♘e7.**

Now it is your move again.



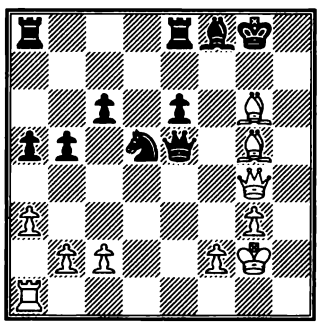
GURGENIDZE

Position after 20 ... ♕c7

TAL

* * * * * *

21 ♖xh7 ♕xe5 22 ♖xf7 ♔xf7 23 ♗xg6+ ♔g8

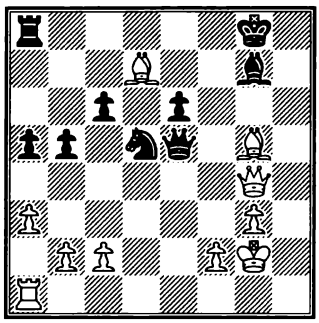


GURGENIDZE

Position after 23 ... ♔g8

TAL

Clearly everything is forced. **24 ♗xe8** In the heat of attacks of this type, the greatest danger is the desire to play 'beautifully' right to the end, but in so doing one can easily 'overcombine'. Tal made the following comments on this position, 'I was very tempted to play 24 ♗h7+. To accept this sacrifice would lose quickly after 24 ... ♔xh7 25 ♖h1+ ♔g6 26 ♗f4+ ♔f6 27 ♕h4+. However, after 24 ... ♔h8 (instead of 24 ... ♔xh7) 25 ♖h1 ♗g7 White does not get much from the discovered check. After the text move, however, I held both positional and material advantage.' **24 ... ♗g7** 24 ... ♖xe8 would have been a mistake because of 25 ♗f6+. **25 ♗d7**

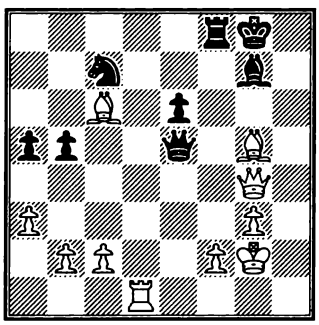


GURGENIDZE

Position after 25 ♗d7

TAL

He wants to lure the knight to c7 and then gobble up the c6 pawn. **25 ... ♘c7** '25 ... ♘e3+ 26 ♗xe3 ♕d5+ 27 ♕f3 ♕xd7 would lead to a hopeless position for Black after 28 ♖d1' (Tal). **26 ♗xc6** The pawn has fallen! The 'curse' on the mysterious move b5!? **26 ... ♖f8 27 ♖d1**



GURGENIDZE

Position after 27 ♖d1

TAL

27 ... ♕c5 If 27 ... ♕xb2 then 28 ♖d7 wins; if 27 ... ♘d5 then 28 ♕xe6+. The rest is easy to follow, and the agony is short lived. **28 ♗f3 ♕xc2 29 ♖d7 ♖f7 30 ♖d8+ ♖f8 31 ♗f6 ♕h7 32 ♗e4 ♕h6 33 ♗g5 ♕h8** Not a particularly illustrious square for the all powerful queen! **34 ♖d7 Resigns**. If 34 ... ♖f7 there follows 35 ♖xc7.

Bloody Revenge

The following game was played in the Candidates match for the World Championship. Previous to this game, Tal had suffered a defeat and in the preamble to the game in the magazine *Schach*, he wrote, 'Koblencs knew my temperament and he quite accepted that this game would not just be a quiet one. His considered advice, which was that I should not lose my head, that there were still seven games to go, was to no avail. It became clear after the first few moves that White intended to do or die.'

This is a typical psychological pre-match outlook, and it lends colour to the game. The thirst for bloody revenge has as its drawback the possible loss of objectivity, that lack of cool-headedness which leads to overestimating one's own threats or underestimating those of one's opponent. However, in the following complicated struggle, Tal does not overstep the permitted limit.

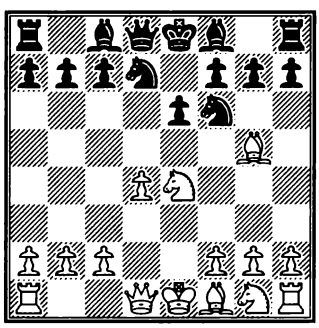
Game No. 31

Tal – Portisch

Candidates match, Bled 1965

French Defence

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♗g5 dxe4 5 ♘xe4 ♘bd7

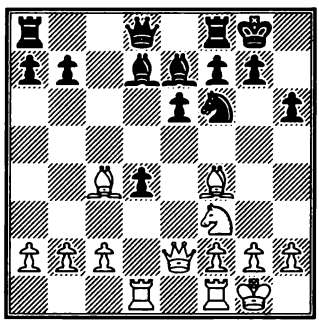


PORTISCH

Position after 5 ... ♘bd7

TAL

Not very enterprising – this line is only adopted when a player is clearly trying for a draw. However, in this case, there is a more fundamental reason for Portisch's choice of this line. On studying Tal's games with his trainer, he had established that the Rigan had not played particularly well against this variation in Curacao – he had even lost to Petrosian. Yet it was a mistake to think like that – why shouldn't Tal be wiser after a setback and have found an improvement for White? A further drawback for Portisch was that he was not especially knowledgeable about the variation, and the rest of the game confirmed that it did not suit him very much. **6 ♘xf6+!** The most accurate move, as after 6 ♘f3 ♗e7 7 ♘xf6+ Black can play 7 ... ♗xf6. As you see, the move order is important here, too! **6 ... ♘xf6 7 ♘f3 c5 8 ♗c4 cxd4 9 0-0 ♗e7 10 ♕e2 h6** Already, Tal is given something to bite at – little wonder that this soon results in action by the ex-world champion. Portisch's text move is intended to remove the pressure of the bishop, but in doing so, he creates an inviting target for White. Black should have simplified by playing 10 ... 0-0 11 ♖d1 ♘d5. **11 ♗f4 0-0 12 ♖ad1 ♗d7**



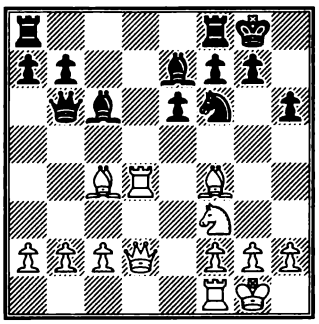
PORTISCH

Position after 12 ... ♗d7

TAL

13 ♖xd4 Tal thought about this move for half an hour. 'It was not easy to decide between choosing the aggressive text move or the positional 13 ♘xd4, when the rook can be moved along the third rank into the attack. But in the final analysis, I was not particularly happy that Black could force the following simplifications, 13 ♘xd4 ♘d5 14 ♗e5 ♗f6 15 ♗xd5 exd5 16 ♗xf6 ♕xf6. Although White would get a positional advantage because of the isolated pawn, I was not convinced that this would ensure the win. **13 ... ♕b6 14 ♕d2!** Now Portisch sank into forty minutes of serious thought. After the game, the Hungarian grandmaster explained the reason for his long reflections. He had hoped that Tal would automatically

play 14 ♖d3, as in the game against Benko (Curacao, 1962), which had proved to be doubtful. As was noted after move 5, Black had indeed looked far, but too gullibly! **14 ... ♗c6** How should Tal now continue?



PORTISCH

Position after 14 ... ♗c6

TAL

* * * * * *

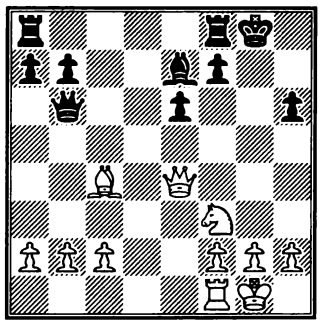
15 ♗xh6 ♘e4

Question 68 **What would happen after 15 ... gxh6 ?**

If Black immediately plays 15 ... ♗xf3, White can give the counter punch 16 ♗xg7. He also has the following typical manoeuvre at his disposal after 16 gxf3 gxh6 17 ♔h1!, whereby he makes use of the open file. **16 ♕f4 gxh6 17 ♖xe4** It is quite evident, from the following remark of Tal's, that he did not make a narrow assessment of his attack, 'The exchange sacrifice changes the course of the game. White is now striving to maintain a prolonged initiative. The attempt to win by force with 17 ♕xh6 would fail, although Black would have a few problems. He could not play 17 ... ♗c5, because of 18 ♘g5!; 17 ... ♖fd8 fails to 18 ♗xe6!; and 17 ... ♕c5 loses to 18 ♗d3.

17 ... ♗xe4 18 ♕xe4

Question 69 **So, what is Black's best defence?**



PORTISCH

Position after 18 ♕xe4

TAL

18 ... ♖ad8

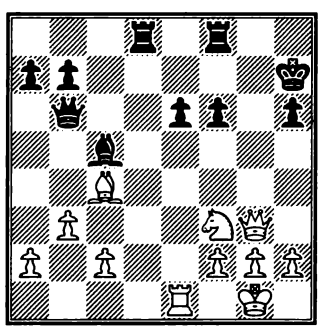
What would follow after 18 ... ♕xb2 or 18 ... ♗f6 ?

* * * * * *

(1) 18 ... ♕xb2 19 ♘e5 with manifold sacrificial threats on e6 and f7;

(2) 18 ... ♗f6 19 ♗d3 ♖fd8 20 ♕h7+ ♔f8 21 ♕xh6+ ♔e7 (weaker would be 21 ... ♗g7 because of 22 ♕f4 or 22 ♕h5) 22 b3 and White has two pawns and a lasting initiative for the exchange (Tal's analysis).

19 b3 The attacker who simply crashes forward has to watch out for counter sacrifices and this is shown by the following line: 19 ♗d3 ♖xd3! followed by ... ♕xb2. **19 ... ♗c5 20 ♕f4** The start of a queen manoeuvre by which White intends to force further weaknesses on the kingside. White could have maintained his positional advantage by playing the quiet 20 c3. The text move is the prelude to a complex winning plan. **20 ... ♔g7 21 ♕e5+ f6 22 ♕g3+ ♔h7 23 ♖e1**



PORTISCH

Position after 23 ♖e1

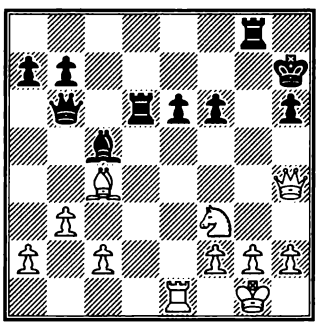
TAL

Let us again look at Tal's analysis from the Latvian chess magazine *Sahs*, 'I had reckoned with the move 23 ... ♗b4 and prepared the following: 24 ♗xe6 ♗xe1 25 ♗f5+ ♔h8 26 ♕g6 ♗xf2+ (if 26 ... ♕xf2+, then 27 ♔h1 ♕f1+ 28 ♘g1) 27 ♔f1 ♖d1+ 28 ♔e2 ♕e3+ 29 ♔xd1.

However, whilst Portisch was thinking deeply about his move, I discovered to my horror, on checking over the variation, that ... '

Question 70 **Well, what was the flaw Tal found?**

'In any case, all was not lost because I could still move the rook away or give perpetual check by playing 24 c3 ♗xc3 25 ♘h4 ♗xe1 26 ♕g6+, but he played automatically for the occupation of the g-file. **23 ... ♖g8 24 ♕h4 ♖d6**



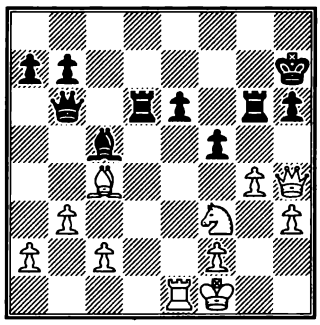
PORTISCH

Position after 24 ... ♖d6

TAL

25 ♔f1 This move seems to be logical: White wants to free the queen from her defensive role, as ♗xf2 would be useless without check. Yet White missed a nice winning chance here, which Koblencs showed me after the game 25 c3 a5 26 a3!! Black has to move either rook or bishop because of the threat of b4, after which he loses a pawn on his e6 or f6: 26 ... ♖c6 27 ♕xf6 ♗xf2+ 28 ♔f1 ♖xc4 29 ♖xe6 or 26 ... f5 27 b4 axb4 28 axb4 ♖g4 29 ♕e7+ ♖g7 30 bxc5 ♕xc5 31 ♕f8! ♖g8 32 ♕f7+ ♖g7 33 ♘g5+ hxg5 34 ♕h5+ ♔g8 35 ♖xe6. Luckily, the king move does not do any harm. Black still has to meet dangerous threats and my opponent was in serious time trouble' (Tal). **25 ... f5 26 h3** Preparing the advance of

the g-pawn to make the decisive thrust at the enemy pawn position. **26 ... ♖g6 27 g4!**



PORTISCH

Position after 27 g4!

TAL

27 ... ♖d7 'Better was 27 ... ♕c6, yet after 28 gxf5 ♕xf3 29 fxg6+ ♔xg6, White still has active play and is also ahead in material' (Tal). **28 ♖xe6!** Avoiding the trap 28 ♗xe6 which simplifies to Black's advantage. **28 ... ♖d1+ 29 ♔g2 ♖xe6 30 ♗xe6 fxg4 31 ♕xg4 ♖d8 32 ♘e5 Resigns**.

Pawn Chain Strategy

I assume you know that pawn chains are pawns which have been advanced in such a way that they are locked together along diagonals. Central pawn chains are linked directly to the corresponding strategic plan, which is to hit at the base of the chain with a pawn and by exchanging pawns, to try to weaken it or to open a file for attacking purposes. The following game is dramatic in that both players strive forcibly to put their plain into operation on opposite sides of the board – White on the queenside, and Black, by means of a pawn storm, on the kingside. It is illuminating to see how Black is able to advance the pawns in front of his own king, because the centre is well and truly closed.

This game also illustrates Tal's subjective idea of risk in chess – a rook and a bishop down, he has to decide whether to content himself with perpetual check or whether to pose some fresh problems for his opponent. However, we do not want to anticipate the events so let's have a look at the game.

Game No. 32

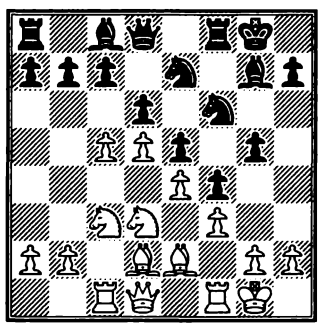
Larsen – Tal

Candidates playoff for 3rd place, Eersel 1969

King's Indian Defence

1 ♘f3 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 d4 0-0 6 ♗e2 e5 7 0-0 ♘c6 8 d5 ♘e7 9 ♘e1 ♘d7 10 ♘d3 f5 11 ♗d2 ♘f6 12 f3 f4 13 c5 Both players rushed through these moves, as this is all well known theory. White has already succeeded in making contact with the base of the chain (the pawn on Black's d6). Black will soon follow the similar strategic plan of making for the base of White's pawn chain (on f3) by playing ... g5-g4.

13 ... g5 14 ♖c1



TAL

Position after 14 ♖c1

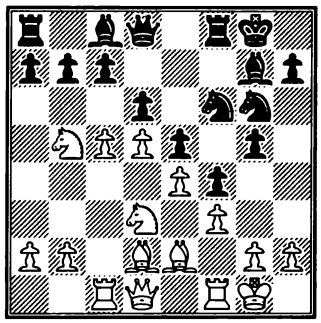
LARSEN

In order to occupy the open file after the exchange of pawns. White (and later Black) has to answer the following questions:

(1) When should the file be opened?

(2) Should it be postponed until the maximum concentration of pieces has been achieved or should it be opened immediately?

Tal chooses the latter method. **14 ... ♘g6 15 ♘b5**



TAL

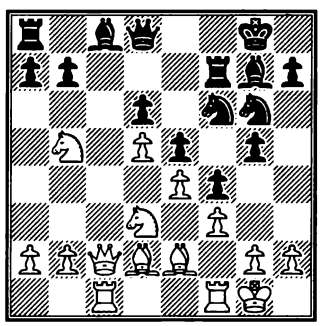
Position after 15 ♘b5

LARSEN

In a previous game against Najdorf, Larsen exchanged pawns first on d6. Perhaps he wanted to tempt Tal into playing 15 ... a6. **15 ... ♖f7** Why did Tal not play 15 ... a6 ?

* * * * * *

It seemed to him that his opponent could make a promising piece sacrifice, 16 cxd6 axb5 17 dxc7 ♕e8 and after 18 d6 or 18 ♘b4 the passed pawns are a threat. **16 cxd6 cxd6 17 ♕c2**



TAL

Position after 17 ♕c2

LARSEN

White's strategic plan is now crystal clear. He already has tight control of the c-file and threatens to penetrate the enemy camp with 18 ♘c7. In Santa Monica 1966, Najdorf had tried to ward off this threat by playing 17 ... ♘e8 but after 18 a4 ♗d7 19 ♕b3 ♗f8 20 ♖c2 h5 21 ♘f2 a6 22 ♘c3 ♘f6 23 h3 ♖g7 24 ♖fc1 White had the stronger initiative. Tal knew this game, yet he still went into this variation, because he had found a more active continuation for Black.

Home analysis can turn out to be useless if one's opponent becomes suspicious and asks himself, 'Why is he going in for a variation which has already been shown to be losing? Is he trying to lead me on? Has he got a refutation?' Taimanov once openly confessed to being completely psychologically undermined when his opponent Simagin rapidly went into one of Taimanov's favourite lines.

However, in our case, Tal was convinced that in Larsen he would find someone with whom he could try out his prepared improvement – for Larsen does not belong to those grandmasters who store up theoretical opening variations and analyse everything in great detail. He is not essentially a doubter – he is, above all, a practical player and if he has satisfied himself of a variation in practice he will go into the fray directly and confidently upon his proven hobby horse. This is what happens here too. **17 ... g4!?**

This is again typical of Tal's style! He ignores the knight entry in order to create conditions for counterplay as quickly as possible. In other words, he freely makes a concession in return for counterplay. It is actually a matter of an exchange – not however, in a material sense, but in the realm of chess dynamics. We are dealing with a kind of law in compensation.

The difficulty in cases like this lies in the fact that there is no scale upon which the concession can be measured against the desired compensation, and the further course of events often depends upon certain dynamic conditions which are not easy to predict clearly. Although from practice we learn that weaknesses near the king are usually more serious than others, knowledge, intuition and willingness to take risks also play their part.

However, let us look at Mikhail Tal's view on this. 'If I am on form, I am lucky, because everything works out for me and to my mind this is one of the elements of success in chess. Obviously, no chess player possesses a perfect combination of attributes – every grandmaster has his individual strong points, his idiosyncrasies, his own disposition or what is most crucial, his creative sight of the board. The chess master who gets to the top by adopting a strictly scientific approach puts knowledge at a premium – but in no way is chess simply a matter of analytical calculation.

There are artists to be found in the ranks of the greatest grandmasters, for example, the ingenious Alekhine could not understand mathematics. The most important aspect of chess for such players is artistic inspiration, and they have a high regard for imaginative qualities. Thus there are those who

interpret chess as a high form of art, which embodies the colourful palette of the emotions. This conception often dominates their games and there is usually no place for the inner warning voice of reason. I must admit that when I have trouble deciding upon this move or that, the argument is often resolved by the conviction, "this move is good – I feel it!"

When judgements are made in this way, we are discussing the intuitive style of a chess master. However, it has to be stressed that this hidden intuition is an individual matter for each player. For one person, the instinct to grasp the initiative may be particularly well developed, whilst another player may not find the quickest and most accurate method of attack, but he is able to recognise and react to even the slightest semblance of danger and a third simply has an intuitive grasp of where best to place his pieces.

This leaves us with the question of risk. It is fairly difficult for me to discuss risk, even more so risk as an element in success, because for the past ten years the press have portrayed Tal as the champion risk-taker. What does risk mean in chess? Is a player conscious of taking a risk? If we assign 'knowledge' to the scientific approach and place 'intuition' in the artistic sphere, we may continue the analogy and connect risk-taking with sport.

We could also bring in the proverb, "nothing ventured, nothing gained". I should, however, like to add that the chess player only really takes risks when he knows what he is risking. A boxer who is only thinking about knocking out his opponent in the last round and forgetting about defence, is taking risks. Yet this is a deliberate and highly dangerous type of risk, which is born out of an all pervading desire to win at all costs! A chess player sacrifices a piece for an attack, even though he is in no way forced to do so. Is he taking risks? Of course he is – the attack may be beaten off and the material advantage can ensure victory for the opponent.

We may take this idea further, in the sense that the defender is in a dilemma – should he accept the sacrifice in the hope that he will be able to beat off the attack, or should he reject it? (given of course, that he has a choice in the matter). He also has to take a risk – if he accepts, the attack may turn out to be irresistible. We still have not found any criteria to measure differences in risk-taking, this is just what makes something a risk.

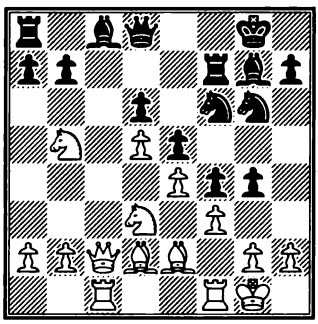
In this respect, I should like to refer to some of my own ideas. In the book on my match against Botvinnik, I wrote that such is the level of chess these days (everyone knows everything!) that one has to prove that 2 + 2 = 5 in order to win. I still hold this view, but as we are discussing risk-taking, I should like to state my case more precisely. If you are thinking of proving to your opponent that 2 + 2 = 5, you must not raise doubts about whether 2 + 2 actually might perhaps make 4. This then, is what real risk-taking is all about, and it is often absolutely necessary in critical situations.

Of course, all this has to be taken with a pinch of salt.

It is difficult to conceive of such an omniscient chess player, who never entertains doubts during the game. Moreover, a player who advocates intuitive styles cannot count on success if he contravenes the exact specific requirements of calculation or if his intuition is not in close harmony with his knowledge.

To return to my first remarks, I should like to stress that the most important thing in practice, is to be in excellent form, then everything will work out – knowledge will be used to the full, our intuition will not desert us and risks will be successful.'

However, let's get back to the game.



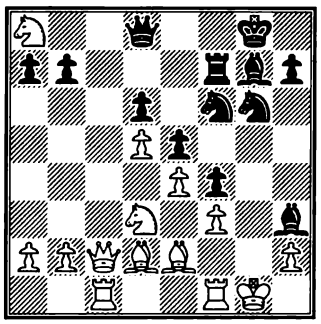
TAL

Position after 17 ... g4

LARSEN

18 ♘c7 gxf3 19 gxf3

To capture the rook immediately would of course be wrong, because of 19 ♘xa8 fxe2 20 ♖fe1 ♗g4. Also, to take the pawn with the bishop would have its drawbacks – sooner or later the white pawn on e4 could come under threat and would have to be defended passively. **19 ... ♗h3 20 ♘xa8**



TAL

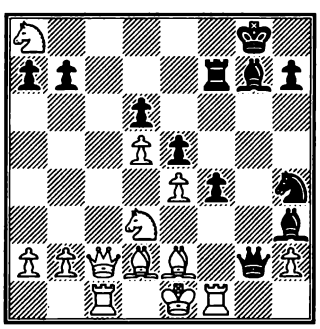
Position after 20 ♘xa8!

LARSEN

In order to clarify Tal's further ideas in this game, we ought to look at how the match stood. The score was 3-1 in Larsen's favour and the match was only over eight games! So it is readily understandable that nothing less than a win would satisfy Tal and he played for it boldly. Tal made the following comment on Larsen's 20th move, 'a most unpleasant decision by Larsen. White satisfies himself with a forced drawing variation – otherwise he would have tried to disrupt Black's set-up by playing 20 ♘e6.' Alekhine once complained that the creative process in chess, unlike in other arts, is dependent upon one's opponent's moves and these can ruin the most beautiful of combinations. **20 ... ♘xe4! 21 fxe4** White must not try to avoid perpetual check by playing 21 ♔h1 as Black would get too dangerous an attack after 21 ... ♘g3+ 22 hxg3 fxg3. 'Black can force the draw, but because of the state of the match I decided, after forty minutes thought, to take a sporting chance.' (Tal).

21 ... ♕g5+ 22 ♔f2 ♕g2+

It is easy to see that 22 ... ♕h4+ would secure the draw. **23 ♔e1 ♘h4**



TAL

Position after 23 ... ♘h4

LARSEN

'Despite his great material advantage (rook and knight!) White's situation is by no means easy. If 24 ♖f2 there would follow 24 ... ♕g1+ 25 ♗f1 ♗xf1 26 ♖xf1 ♘f3+. Also White has to reckon with the advance of Black's f-pawn.' (Tal).

24 ♗e3 'After this move, I believed I had been right to take the gamble'. Which move did Tal fear?

* * * * * *

24 ♘f2! would have been strong. Tal had originally intended to play 24 ... ♘f3+ 25 ♔d1 ♘d4 26 ♕a4 ♗g4!? but then he saw the spanner in the works: 27 ♗xg4! ♕xf1+ 28 ♗e1 and all the threats are parried. Black would have had to switch over to 26 ... ♗d7 or 26 ... b5, but then he would not have got sufficient compensation for the deficit in material (also 26 ♕c3! would have been strong, i.e. 26 ... f3 27 ♗c4 ♘e2 28 ♗xe2 fxe2+ 29 ♔xe2 ♗g4+ 30 ♔e1).

Larsen did see the move 24 ♘f2, but he was not happy about Black's knight getting to d4, so did not go any deeper into the position – a typical and frequent error in thinking. Admittedly, Larsen's move is not without its sting.

Question 71 **Should Tal accept the sacrifice?**

24 ... ♕xe4 25 ♗f2

Question 72 **Perhaps 25 ♘xf4 would have been better. What do you think?**

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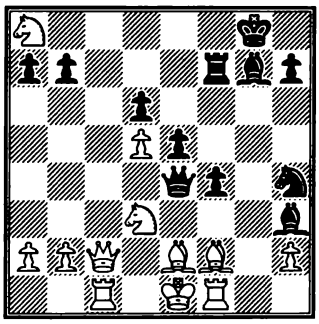


TAL

Position after 25 ♗f2

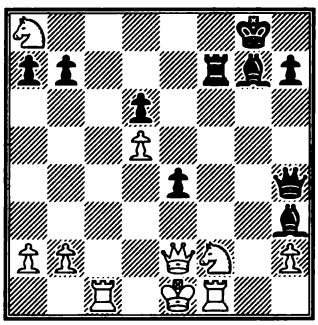
LARSEN

25 ... f3!?

'25 ... ♘g2+ 26 ♔d2 f3 27 ♗d1 ♕xd5 would have been more promising.' (Tal). **26 ♗xh4! ♕xh4+** If 26 ... ♗xf1 there follows 27 ♘f2! but not 27 ♔xf1.

Question 73 **Why not?**

27 ♘f2 fxe2 28 ♕xe2 e4



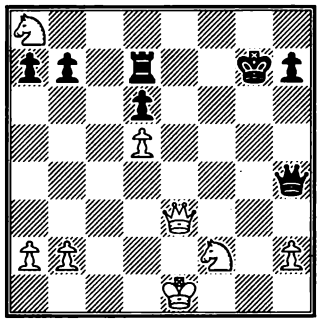
TAL

Position after 28 ... e4

LARSEN

Tal only had two minutes left for the last twelve moves, and Larsen then began to make the mistake of playing quickly too. In one sense, this is understandable; one does not want to allow one's opponent time to think. In another sense however, playing quickly in one's opponent's time trouble can simply be for the psychological reason that one is involuntarily carried along by the speed of play.

It is also possible that emotions play their part, in that the expectation of an imminent victory produces excitement and evokes ill-considered moves. Whatever the reasons for Larsen's rate of play, he would certainly have found 29 ♖c7 if he had thought long enough, after which, according to Tal, he could still have viewed the future in peace. **29 ♖g1 e3 30 ♕xe3 ♖e7 31 ♖xg7+ ♔xg7 32 ♖c7 ♗d7 33 ♖xd7 ♖xd7**



TAL

Position after 33 ... ♖xd7

LARSEN

34 ♕xa7? White is now basically playing for a win, instead of simply being satisfied with the draw which he could try for with 34 ♕c3+ ♕f6 35 ♕g3+, but it is difficult to content oneself with a draw, when one feels that a clear win has been thrown away. One becomes stubborn, and plays to win, failing to notice that the main chance has now passed. Of course, the hectic time-scramble plays its part in this too. **34 ... ♖e7+** Had he overlooked this simple move? **35 ♔d1 ♕c4! 36 ♕b6 ♕f1+ 37 ♔d2 ♖e2+ 38 ♔c3 ♕c1+ 39 ♔d4 ♕e3+ 40 ♔c4 ♖c2+ Resigns**. Then the match stood only at 3-2 in Larsen's favour.

A Thorn in the Flesh

The next game illustrates a type of attack which forces the defender to alter his pawn structure, and this results in weaknesses and creates squares from which to invade enemy territory. A typical example of this is the advance of the white pawn to f6, which helps with mating threats. It is instructive to see how the pawn snakes over via f4, e5 to f6.

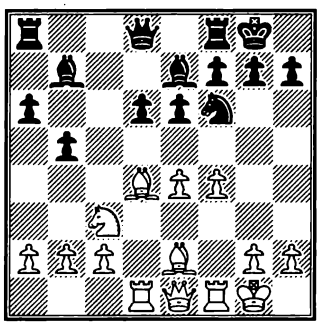
Game No. 33

Tal – Andersson

Stockholm 1976

Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 e6 6 ♗e2 ♗e7 7 0-0 0-0 8 f4 ♘c6 9 ♗e3 a6 10 ♕e1 ♘xd4 11 ♗xd4 b5 12 ♖d1 ♗b7



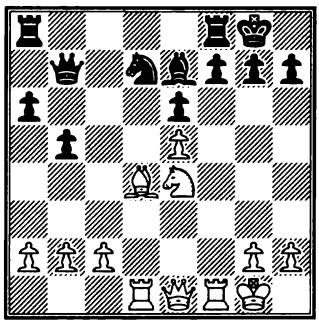
ANDERSSON

Position after 12 ... ♗b7

TAL

A characteristic middlegame position, which appears almost automatically after the opening moves of the so-called Scheveningen variation. The most important feature of the position is that White has exchanged a central pawn for a flank pawn, thus giving Black a pawn majority in the centre (the pawns on his e6 and d6 versus the white pawn on e4). The whole set-up of the pieces determines each player's strategic plan.

White will try to drive away the defensive knight on Black's kingside by playing e4-e5 and then eventually move the queen or one of the rooks over to the kingside for attack. Yet Black also has his own counter plan; an isolated pawn on White's e5 can become a target for attack and also Black's pressure on the half-open c-file must not be underestimated – in short, we have the prospect of a double-edged game. **13 ♗f3** White begins his threats: he intends to follow up with e5. **13 ... ♕c7 14 e5 dxe5 15 fxe5 ♘d7** Perhaps 15 ... ♘d5 was the lesser evil, but from d2 Black ambitiously aims to liquidate White's central pawn. **16 ♗xb7 ♕xb7 17 ♘e4**



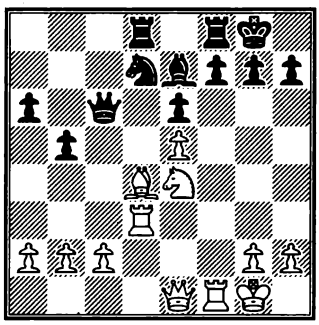
ANDERSSON

Position after 17 ♘e4

TAL

So far, the moves have followed the game Tscheskovsky – Petrushin. The modern chess master has to know his theory; he must always keep himself in the picture – unless he wants to waste his time going over well known territory. **17 ... ♖ad8 18 ♖d3** The most energetic move. The mighty rook has his next designs on the kingside. Tal was satisfied that the pawn on e5 could be defended by 18 ♕e2 or 18 ♖f4. The black knight on d7 can not leave its post because of ♘f6+!

18 ... ♕c6!



ANDERSSON

Position after 18 ... ♕c6!

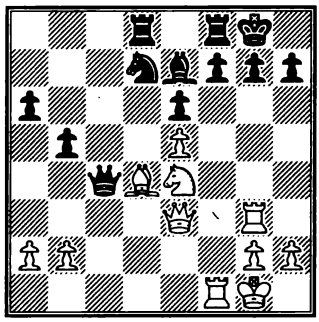
TAL

How is White's pawn on c2 to be defended? After 19 c3, the bishop on d4 is pinned by 19 ... ♘xe5. If 19 ♖c3 there follows the favourable centralisation of the black queen by 19 ... ♕d5 and, finally, if 19 ♕e2 Black can simplify adequately with 19 ... ♘c5. What would you play next?

* * * * * *

19 ♖g3!

White offers a pawn, and what is more important, voluntarily removes the guard on the bishop! **19 ... ♕xc2** It is not difficult to see that 19 ... ♗h4 would have been catastrophic for Black, because the rook sacrifice discovers an attack on the bishop: 19 ... ♗h4 20 ♖xg7+ ♔xg7 21 ♕xh4 with the terrible threat of ♘f6. **20 ♕e3** Innocently threatening 21 ♕h6, which Black parries with his next move. **20 ... ♕c4**



ANDERSSON

Position after 20 ... ♕c4

TAL

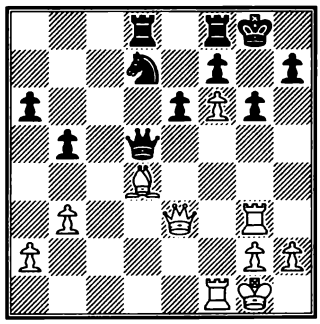
Question 74 **What is strongest here? Spend some time on this!**

21 b3?

Tal was critical of this move, although White still maintains his positional advantage. White simply thought that after the forced exchange of Black's king bishop, and the further weakness ... g6, the game would just win itself. However, the position did not turn out to be quite as simple as that and White had to win the game a second time.

21 ... ♕d5

Not, however, 21 ... ♕b4 because of 22 a3! diverting the queen from attacking the bishop. **22 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 23 exf6 g6** White has now forced on Black an unfavourable pawn structure around his king; the thorn in his flesh on f6 paralyses the kingside, the black squares are very weak and h6 just invites the queen in to threaten mate.



ANDERSSON

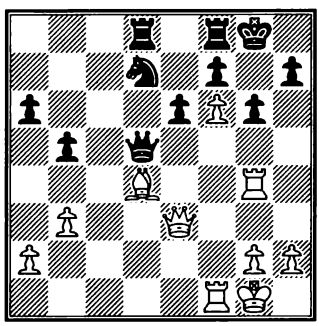
Position after 23 ... g6

TAL

What is happening in this position?

* * * * * *

Let us look at how Tal assessed the situation, 'At this point, I thought long and hard. The attacking machinery can be seen clearly enough – the question is how best to operate it. At first I intended to play 24 ♖g5 but after 24 ... ♕d6 (24 ... e5 25 ♖xe5!) the rook is not very well placed. Then the following line really looked tempting 25 ♖g4 e5! 26 ♕h6 ♘xf6 27 ♖h4 ♖fe8? 28 ♖xf6 ♕xf6 29 ♕xh7+ ♔f8 30 ♗c5+! ♖d6 (or 30 ... ♖e7) 31 ♕h8+ winning a piece – but 27 ... ♘h5 (instead of 27 ... ♖fe8?) refutes White's attacking idea. Yet something inside told me that there simply must be a win in this position somewhere, and indeed ...' **24 ♖g4!** Immediately threatening 25 ♕h6.



ANDERSSON

Position after 24 ♖g4!

TAL

24 ... ♔h8

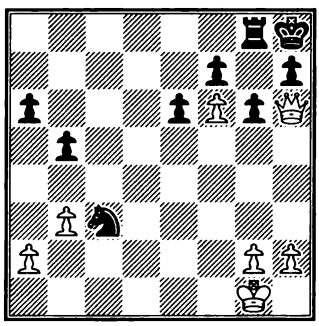
Question 75 **The alternative was 24 ... e5. Analyse this move, please.**

Now try to find White's next bombshell!

* * * * * *

25 ♗b6!

This is the point! This surprising and ingenious move either drives away the enemy queen from the fifth rank or captures her. The knight on d7 is overloaded – it dare not concede the control of f6 (25 ... ♘xf6 26 ♕h6) **25 ... ♖c8 26 ♕h6 ♖g8 27 ♖d4!** Because of the mating threat of 28 ♕xh7+, followed by 29 ♖h4, the queen may not abandon the fifth rank, so Black exchanges her for rook and knight. **27 ... ♘xb6 28 ♖xd5 ♘xd5 29 ♖f3 ♖c3 30 ♖xc3 ♘xc3**



ANDERSSON

Position after 30 ... ♘xc3

TAL

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31 ♕e3

The queen has done her work on the kingside. Now she attends to the struggle on the queenside. **31 ... b4** Black should have made life most difficult by playing 31 ... ♘d5 32 ♕a7 ♖f8 33 ♕xa6 b4! with a draw! Admittedly White does not have to greedily capture the pawn. After 33 a3! he would win. The game continued thus: **32 ♕a7 ♖f8 33 ♕c5 ♖b8 34 ♕d6 Resigns**. 34 ... ♖e8 would be followed by 35 ♕e7!

On All Fronts

Following a survey in *Informator*, the next game was nominated by the leading chess journalists as the best of the year in 1973. Actually, it impressed them not only because of its breadth of action, but also because of its creative depth and its compelling logic. It is seldom that one sees such a tenacious struggle, fought on all fronts of the chessboard.

A firm belief in the potential strength of his mobile pawn centre led Black to make a positional pawn sacrifice early in the opening. The action centres initially on the queenside, and this is then followed by an exchange sacrifice on the kingside which makes possible a pawn push in the middle. Then there are pins on the queenside and finally Tal succeeds in producing a kingside attack which finishes with a twist, forcing his great adversary to capitulate after a bishop sacrifice.

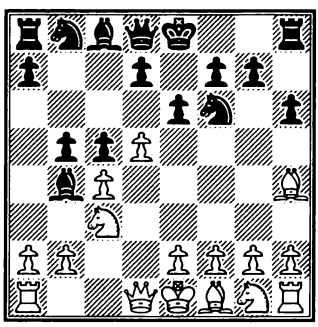
Game No. 34

Spassky – Tal

Tallinn 1973

Nimzo-Indian Defence

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 ♗g5 h6! Black has his eye on the possibility of playing ... c5 and ... ♕a5, and he wants to divert the bishop from defence of the queenside. Also, after timing a later ... g5, Black can unpin his knight and use it to counterattack. **5 ♗h4 c5 6 d5 b5!?**

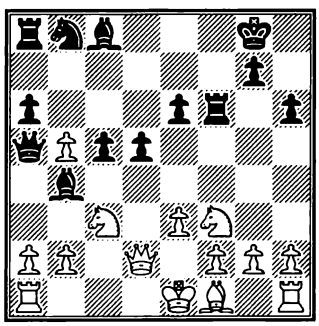


TAL

Position after 6 ... b5!?

SPASSKY

Often a player's personality plays a decisive role in his choice of move. In no way was Black forced to make this sacrifice – he could have first played the quiet 6 ... ♗xc3+ or 6 ... d6 or even 6 ... e5, but Tal is Tal! **7 dxe6** He accepts the challenge. He also had another possibility – namely to tempt Black to weaken his kingside by playing 7 e4 g5!? 8 ♗g3 ♘xe4 9 ♗e5 with a double-edged game. **7 ... fxe6 8 cxb5 d5** Black has a mobile centre in return for the pawn, and White has constantly to watch out for this 'lust to expand'. The question is whether Black (after the appropriate preparation) will advance the king pawn or the queen pawn. **9 e3** Slowing down Black's advance and also aiding the development of his own kingside. **9 ... 0-0 10 ♘f3** Perhaps White would have done better to put the question to the bishop by playing 10 a3 first. **10 ... ♕a5! 11 ♗xf6** This exchange is forced because 11 ... ♘e4 already threatens. **11 ... ♖xf6 12 ♕d2 a6**



TAL

Position after 12 ... a6

SPASSKY

13 bxa6!?

This move allows Black to get a dangerous initiative. Perhaps Spassky overlooked Tal's 15th move. Preferable was 13 ♗e2 axb5 14 0-0. **13 ... ♘c6! 14 ♗e2** Tal recommended 14 ♕c1 in order to meet 14 ... d4 with a3 and after 15 ... ♗xc3+ 16 bxc3 White would have nothing to fear. Often one is reluctant to admit having made an error (playing 14 ♕c1 would turn 12 ♕d2 into a loss of tempo!) and one sticks stubbornly to one's choice. (Of course, we cannot be certain that this was the reason in Spassky's case). What should Tal play now?

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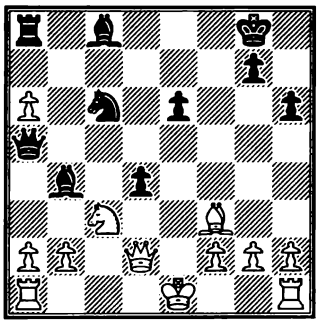
14 ... d4 15 exd4 ♖xf3! This exchange sacrifice paves the way for the pawns to break through. **16 ♗xf3 cxd4**



TAL

Position after 16 ... cxd4

SPASSKY

17 0-0 What did Tal have in mind if Spassky had played 17 ♖c1 ?

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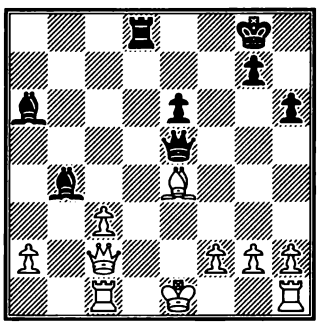
17 ... ♗xa6! would follow (nothing is gained from 17 ... dxc3 18 bxc3); e.g. 18 ♗xc6 ♖d8 19 ♕c2 dxc3 20 bxc3 ♕e5+ 21 ♗e4



TAL

Analysis after 21 ♗e4

SPASSKY

21 ... ♗d3! Instead of this, Tal had yet another variation in reserve. Which one?

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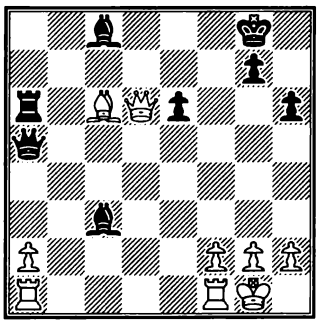
21 ... ♗xc3+ 22 ♕xc3 ♕xe4+ 23 ♕e3 ♕xg2 24 ♕xe6+ (the only move!) 24 ... ♔h8 25 ♕c6 ♕xc6 26 ♖xc6 ♗b7! and Black wins a rook. If 27 ♖xh6+ gxh6 28 0-0 then 28 ... ♖g8 mate and if 28 ♖g1 (instead of 28 0-0) then 28 ... ♗f3! forces mate.

17 ... dxc3 18 bxc3 ♗xc3 19 ♕d6 ♖xa6 Naturally, not 19 ... ♗xa1 because of 20 ♕xc6. **20 ♗xc6** Because of the threat 20 ... ♘e5, the knight has to be captured. What should Black play now?



TAL

Position after 20 ♗xc6

SPASSKY

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20 ... ♗b4!

This is the point of the combination, started on move 15! The queen has to abandon her defence of the bishop, which is then lost. However, White still hopes to save himself by a counter pin. **21 ♕b8 ♖xc6 22 ♖ac1 ♗c5 23 ♖c2** 'Spassky intends to get pressure on the c-file, but in doing this he weakens his own f2. Perhaps 23 ♖cd1 offered better counter-chances' (Tal). Now for a quiet, but strong move! What is it?

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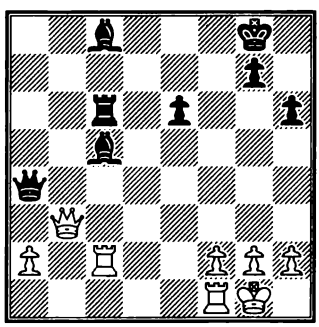
23 ... ♕a4 24 ♕b3

24 ♖fc1 does not work because of 24 ... ♗xf2+.

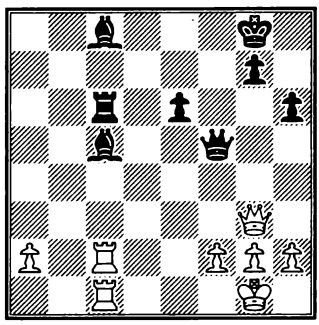


TAL

Position after 24 ♕b3

SPASSKY

24 ... ♕f4 The action moves to the kingside. Tal had the possibility of 24 ... ♕e4, but he discarded it, because of the following line, 25 ♖fc1 ♗b7 26 ♕xb7 ♗xf2+ (An important 'zwischenzug' which gives White a few problems. Thus 27 ♔h1 would be a mistake because of the unprotected back rank 27 ... ♖xc2!) However, 27 ♔f1! ♕d3+ 28 ♔xf2 ♖xc2+ 29 ♖xc2 ♕xc2+ and Tal thought that the queen ending with a pawn up would present too many technical difficulties, and also this would be giving up his advantage too cheaply. **25 ♕g3 ♕f5** Naturally Tal, as aggressor, avoids exchanging queens. **26 ♖fc1** What would you play now?



TAL

Position after 26 ♖fc1

SPASSKY

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26 ... ♗b7!

The bishop occupies the long diagonal – a pre-requisite for the decisive attack on the king. It is strange how the constant threat of the bishop sacrifice hangs like the Sword of Damocles over White's head.

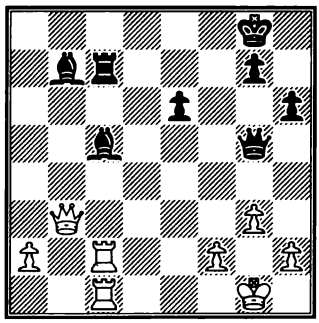
Question 76 **What happens if White now goes for the bishop with 27 ♕b8+ ?**

27 ♕f3 ♕g5 28 ♕b3

Question 77 **And if 28 ♕g3 what had Black in mind?**

28 ... ♖c7 29 g3

Now it is your move again!



TAL

Position after 29 g3

SPASSKY

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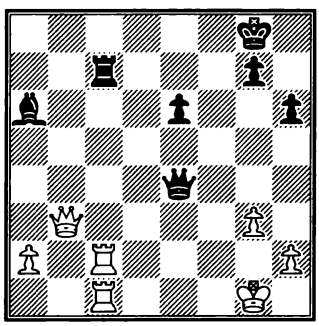
29 ... ♗xf2+ !

He gets out of the pin with check! Moreover, the king will now be completely exposed. **30 ♔xf2 ♕f6+** Time trouble! Quicker was 30 ... ♕f5+ 31 ♔g1 ♕e4 with the decisive, murderous threat on the long diagonal. However, after the text move White's situation still remains hopeless. There followed: **31 ♔e1 ♕e5+ 32 ♔f1 ♗a6+ 33 ♔g1 ♕d4+ 34 ♔g2 ♕e4+ 35 ♔g1**



TAL

Position after 35 ♔g1

SPASSKY

35 ... ♗b7 A little later than necessary, the harmonious combination of queen and bishop comes into play. **36 h4 ♕h1+ 37 ♔f2 ♖f7+** The rook will just not be left out! **38 ♔e2 ♕e4+ 39 Resigns**.

An Exploding Centre

In the early stages of the opening we usually follow general strategic ideas, without involving them too much in specific tactical problems. This is understandable as an opponent has too many replies at his disposal. It would be impractical and also scarcely feasible to calculate the exact consequences of every move. The problems which we have to solve are essentially strategic in the main.

However, as we have already seen, the struggle to control the centre introduces a special feature. In battle terms, the centre is a kind of strategically important hill, whose occupation can serve as a base for further manoeuvres and early skirmishes are fought around it with this end in view. On closer analysis, the fundamental problems of all opening systems are concerned with the centre and speed in development.

The next game presents us with a particular example. Black succeeds in building up explosive piece pressure on the only open central file and in gaining full control of the centre. Naturally, Black is not able to predict for every future eventuality, but we learn from practice that positional advantages sooner or later lead to a dynamic explosion of the energy in hand. Yet it has to be stressed that such explosions do not just occur as a matter of course; the positional advantages have to be constantly reinforced and turned to real gain by use of energetic tactics and, here again, initiative is of prime importance.

Game No. 35

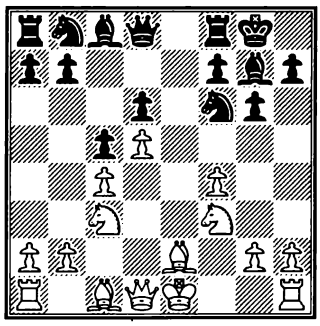
Thorbergsson – Tal

Reykjavik 1964

King's Indian Defence

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 0-0 5 f4 d6 White has built up a broad pawn centre. **6 ♘f3 c5** This typical flank advance gives White a spatial

advantage, but this will be compensated by the increased effectiveness of the black bishop on the long diagonal. **7 d5 e6 8 ♗e2 exd5 9 exd5**

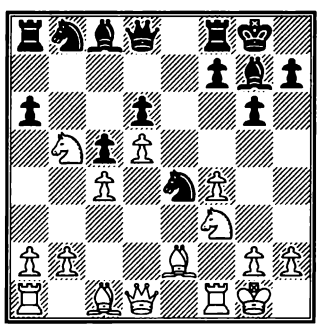


TAL

Position after 9 exd5

THORBERGSSON

Now the e-file is opened and it is a question of who will get the upper hand and be able to make the quicker use of it. After White's fifth move, his e4 can no longer be protected by a pawn if need be, and the square tends to be weak, although for the moment it is adequately protected by the queen's knight. Black chooses an extreme measure with his next move – he attempts to divert the knight from its defensive function by sacrificing a pawn. **9 ... b5!?** Here 9 ... ♖e8 or 9 ... ♗f5 are often tried. **10 ♘xb5** 10 cxb5 a6 can lead to positions similar to those found in the Volga-Gambit (also called the Benko Gambit) when Black gets enough compensation on the half-open a- and b-files. **10 ... ♘e4 11 0-0 a6**



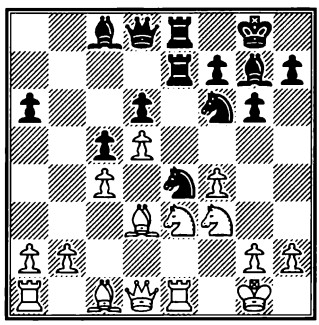
TAL

Position after 11 ... a6

THORBERGSSON

12 ♘a3 White should have given the pawn back by playing 12 ♘c3, but psychologically it is not so easy to be parted so quickly from something that one has only just gained. The player thinks to himself, 'there are no particular threats to worry about at the moment, and I can always give the pawn back later, when the position becomes more critical.' Another thought which frequently occurs is, 'why should I just give it back so

tamely?' One naturally wishes to see the accuracy of such a cheeky sacrifice put to the test during the further course of the game. However, a drawback to the knight move is that on a3 it is passive, and what is even more important – it is separated from the main action in the centre. **12 ... ♖a7! 13 ♗d3 ♖e7 14 ♘c2 ♖fe8 15 ♖e1 ♘d7 16 ♘e3 ♘df6**



TAL

Position after 16 ... ♘df6

THORBERGSSON

The effect of Black's latent central energy is overwhelming – an advanced knight can be particularly strong if it is supported by a battery of rooks. Firstly, the knight is not easy to remove: after 17 ♗xe4 ♘xe4 the second knight takes its place and in the absence of White's king bishop, his white squares would become weak. Secondly, White has always to reckon with the knight being moved away and the subsequent crushing pressure from the rooks. Finally, centralising in this way also entails the following important advantages: the pieces are grouped dangerously near the enemy king and can produce a devastating kingside attack at any moment – the black knight on e4 being a particularly dangerous piece.

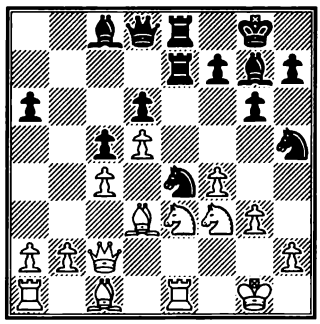
In view of Black's position, White's opening strategy may be said to have been refuted. His queenside is undeveloped: two pieces block the path of the queen's bishop along its natural and important diagonal and it is not clear at the moment how his rook on a1 is to be brought into play. It is now highly instructive to see how Black makes use of his positional pressure. **17 ♕c2** What would you play now for Black?

* * * * * *

17 ... ♘h5!

The knight move to the side of the board, so often adversely criticised, is fully justified in this particular position, because it aims to weaken the

opposing pawn structure. **18 g3** This weakening move is forced, because if 18 ♘f1, the full effect of the doubled rooks would be felt after 18 ... ♘g5!.



TAL

Position after 18 g3

THORBERGSSON

What is the best way to continue for Black now?

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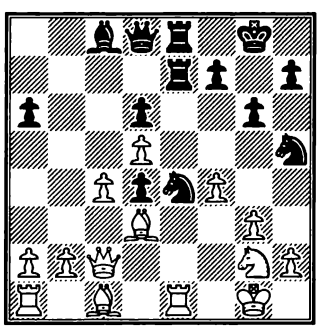
18 ... ♗d4!

It requires a fine positional sense and a certain mental flexibility to offer the exchange of a king's bishop which has such firm control of its diagonal! However, it is more important here for Black to remove the barricade of pieces from the centre in order to maximise the effectiveness of the rooks and to produce the conditions required for invasion into enemy territory. **19 ♘xd4 cxd4 20 ♘g2** How should Black now strengthen his initiative?



TAL

Position after 20 ♘g2

THORBERGSSON

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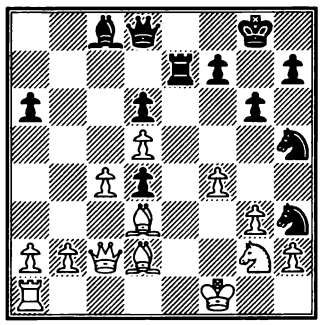
20 ... ♘g5!

Switching to the attack on the king! **21 ♖xe7 ♘h3+ 22 ♔f1 ♖xe7 23 ♗d2**



TAL

Position after 23 ♗d2

THORBERGSSON

There now follows a quite simple, yet very instructive move. Can you see which?

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23 ... ♘f6!

The general of this wooden army is always responsible for the deployment of his forces. Every opportunity should be taken to place a piece in a more favourable and active position. The knight has done its job on h5, and to leave it standing there at the side of the board commits it to a static role. It really hasn't deserved such a fate and the text move makes it more active – now it is aiming for g4! **24 ♘h4 ♘g4 25 ♘f3** How would you have met 25 ♔g2?

* * * * * *

Tal was going to play 25 ... ♕e8 with the threat of 26 ... ♖e2+! How should the game be continued after the text move 25 ♘f3 ?

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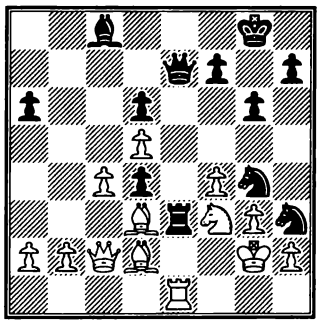
25 ... ♖e3! 26 ♔g2 ♕e7 27 ♖e1



TAL

Position after 27 ♖e1

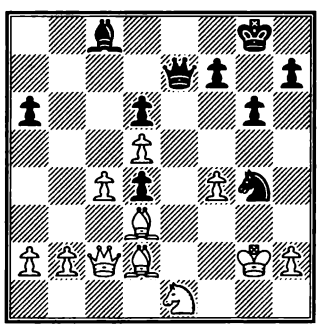
THORBERGSSON

Clearly a logical move. Naturally, he wants to challenge the opposing pressure on an open file and weaken this by exchange or by driving the rook away. Yet what should Black do now? Has he got to settle for compromise by exchanging rooks, or can he do something else? What do you think?

* * * * * *

27 ... ♘xf4+!

So far, Black has played purely positionally. His pieces are strongly placed around the centre and threaten the opposing king but he has not yet taken on any specific tactical measures. Now he reaps the fruits of his positional play and he can turn on the sacrifices. The whole of the preceding play bears excellent witness to Emanuel Lasker's dictum that 'positional play paves the way for combinations.' **28 gxf4 ♖xe1 29 ♘xe1** The bishop could not capture on e1, of course, because of the knight fork on e3. Now, however, comes the point of the combination. Can you see it?



TAL

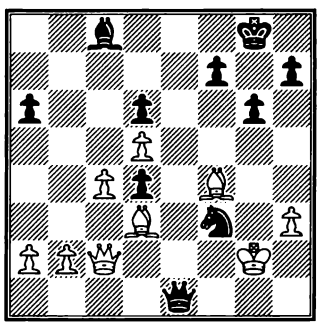
Position after 29 ♘xe1

THORBERGSSON

* * * * * *

29 ... ♕h4!

Now the idea behind the knight sacrifice becomes clear – Black recognises that White's f2 is his weakest point. The art of great players consists in this ability to recognise with great clarity any invasion squares in the enemy camp. Now that the white pawn has been diverted from g3 to f4, the invasion square h4 is unprotected and this makes it possible for queen and knight to combine in harmony. **30 ♗c1** This is the only way to protect both e3 and f2. **30 ... ♕xe1 31 h3** The move 31 f5 would free an important central square for Black (31 ... ♘e5!). **31 ... ♘h6 32 f5** To create some breathing space for the queen's bishop. **32 ... ♘xf5 33 ♗f4 ♘h4+** 'Here I am again', the knight seems to announce boldly. **34 ♔h2 ♘f3+ 35 ♔g2** Can Black strengthen his attack any further?



TAL

Position after 35 ♔g2

THORBERGSSON

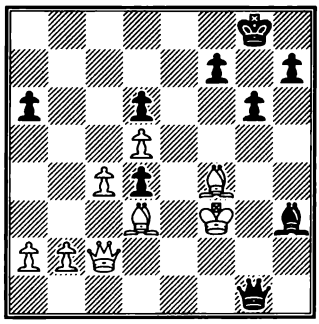
* * * * * *

35 ... ♗xh3+!

The bishop makes its first move – but what a move! **36 ♔xf3** Of course not 36 ♔xh3, because of 36 ... ♕h4+ 37 ♔g2 ♘e1+. How should Black continue his attack after the text move? Join in the combinations yourself for a while!

* * * * * *

36 ... ♕g1!



TAL

Position after 36 ... ♕g1!

THORBERGSSON

To the chess player, a quiet move after a sacrifice is like a vintage wine to the connoisseur. Now there is the terrible threat of 37 ... ♗g4+ 38 ♔e4 f5 mate, and despite this quiet move White gets no time with which to improve his position. Exposed kings can rarely stand out against a combined attack from queen and minor piece. **37 ♗xg6**

Question 78 **Desperation. What would follow if he had played (1) 37 ♗h6 or (2) 37 ♔e2 trying to run away?**

37 ... ♕g4+ 38 ♔f2 ♕xf4+ 39 ♔g1 hxg6 40 Resigns.

One of Tal's most beautiful games, which lays to rest the absurd rumours that he does not play logically and that he ignores the principles of positional play.

From Poetry to Prose

Tal's next game illustrates that an exposed king position does not always lead to an explosive finish. One can also content oneself with the more modest possession of the better endgame position. The game is unique in chess literature. At one stage, three of Tal's pieces (queen, bishop and knight) are all en prise, and Tal sacrifices his queen for a single knight. Yet in contrast to mating combinations in which a major sacrifice is followed

up by a few forced moves to mate, White in this case aims to secure a favourable rook ending by tactical measures reminiscent of a tightrope act!

When we analyse the ideas behind the combination more closely, we shall confirm that Tal is not actually using 'black magic' in this game – a game in which the black king stands open in the centre, and a crafty little white pawn is allowed to advance to g7, thereby rendering the important square f8 inaccessible to the black king. However, even if this 'black magic' does become explicable, let us pay tribute to Mikhail Tal's fantastic tactical sense.

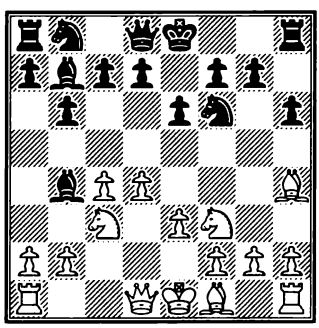
Game No. 36

Tal – Hecht

Chess Olympiad, Varna 1962

Queen's Indian Defence

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 b6 4 ♘c3 ♗b4 5 ♗g5 ♗b7 The main idea of this set-up is to prevent White's king pawn from moving to e4 by piece pressure on this square. **6 e3 h6 7 ♗h4**



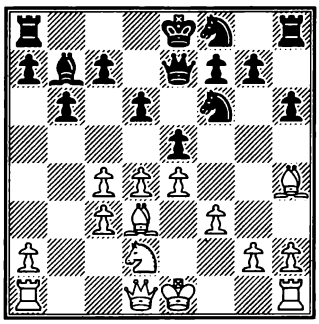
HECHT

Position after 7 ♗h4

TAL

7 ... ♗xc3+ This gives his opponent a permanent pawn weakness but the exchange also strengthens White's pawn centre and leaves him with the pair of bishops. The pin on the king's knight is unpleasant for Black, so his next moves are concerned with the strategic plan of removing the pin (g7-g5 would be too dangerous because of the pawn weaknesses on the kingside!). **8 bxc3 d6 9 ♘d2 e5 10 f3 ♕e7** Black wants to force White to

play e4, by threatening to play ... e5 himself, in order to close the diagonal b1-h7, and thus limit the effect of White's king bishop. Strategic objectives like these, which aim to force an opponent to misplace his pieces, are important elements in modern opening theory. **11 e4 ♘bd7 12 ♗d3 ♘f8**



HECHT

Position after 12 ... ♘f8

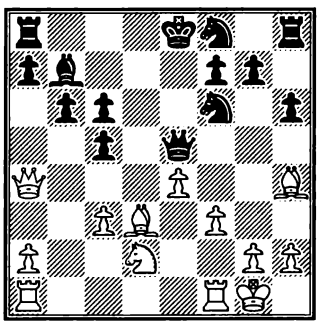
TAL

A consequential move. He intends to remove the pin immediately by playing 13 ... ♘g6. (Safer however, would have been 13 ... 0-0) What is Tal's reply?

* * * * * *

13 c5!

Black had overlooked this promising pawn sacrifice. It enables White to break up the centre and to considerably weaken Black's d6. **13 ... dxc5 14 dxe5 ♕xe5 15 ♕a4+** The traditional check on the open diagonal. **15 ... c6** Also possible was 15 ... ♘8d7, but Black would then have had to lose a few tempi before castling because of the reply ♗xf6. **16 0-0**



HECHT

Position after 16 0-0

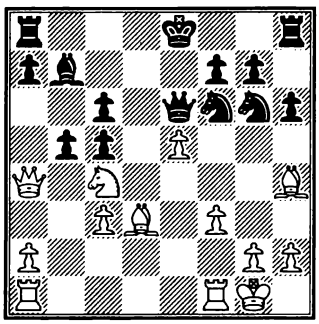
TAL

16 ... ♘g6

Question 79 **What would happen after 16 ... ♕xc3 ?**

17 ♘c4 ♕e6 18 e5!

Ignoring the terrible pawn fork. **18 ... b5**



HECHT

Position after 18 ... b5

TAL

This is the position described in the introductory remarks to this game. Which continuation do you propose?

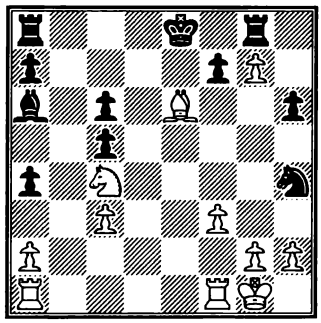
* * * * * *

19 exf6! bxa4 20 fxg7 ♖g8 21 ♗f5!

This is the surprising point! White, who at present has but a meagre knight for his queen, leaves another three pieces loose! (bishops on f5 and h4, knight on c4) **21 ... ♘xh4**

Question 80 **White is so well off, that he can give something back. Shouldn't Black have played 21 ... ♕xc4 ?**

22 ♗xe6 ♗a6



HECHT

Position after 22 ... ♗a6

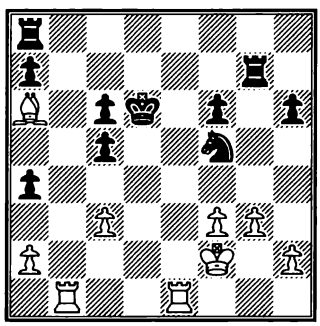
TAL

An ingenious reply. How is the threatened knight on c4 to be protected?

* * * * * *

23 ♘d6+ ♔e7 24 ♗c4!

The piece is saved! **24 ... ♖xg7 25 g3 ♔xd6 26 ♗xa6 ♘f5** Better was 26 ... ♖ag8. **27 ♖ab1 f6 28 ♖fd1+ ♔e7 29 ♖e1+ ♔d6 30 ♔f2**



HECHT

Position after 30 ♔f2

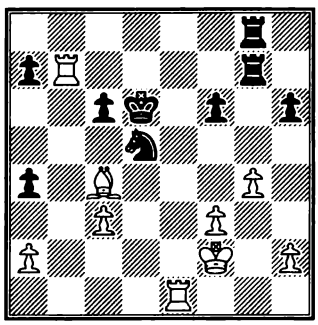
TAL

The storm had abated. White can feel happy about the endgame as Black's pawns are strewn all over the board. Sharp attacks need not always end with mate. Now the bread-and-butter work begins – technique takes over.

In contrast to the fiery sacrifices, this aspect of the game seems to many learners to be dull and uninteresting, and consequently they pay too little

attention to it in their training. The psychological consequences of this change are that in the endgame one becomes negligent and one underestimates counter chances because of the relaxation in tension and concentration.

Bronstein has made a particularly clear comment about the importance of technique, 'It is unthinkable that one should become a master – either in the Arts or in chess – without technique'. No remarks are made on the following endgame, which Tal brings to a close precisely and systematically. **30 ... c4 31 g4 ♘e7 32 ♖b7 ♖ag8 33 ♗xc4 ♘d5**

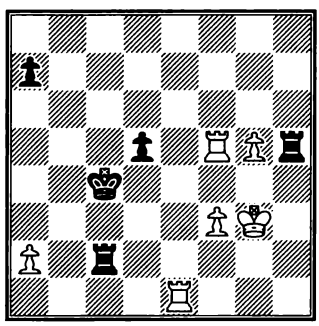


HECHT

Position after 33 ... ♘d5

TAL

34 ♗xd5 cxd5 35 ♖b4 ♖c8 36 ♖xa4 ♖xc3 37 ♖a6+ ♔c5 38 ♖xf6 h5 39 h3 hxg4 40 hxg4 ♖h7 41 g5 ♖h5 42 ♖f5 ♖c2+ 43 ♔g3 ♔c4



HECHT

Position after 43 ... ♔c4

TAL

44 ♖ee5! d4 45 g6 ♖h1 46 ♖c5+! ♔d3 47 ♖xc2 ♔xc2 48 ♔f4 ♖g1 49 ♖g5 Resigns.

A Combinative Counterattack

In previous chapters we have seen a wide variety of Tal's attacking games. We have witnessed how the ex-world champion seized the initiative and on the whole dictated the terms and forced his opponents to defend passively.

However, in the next game, we see Tal for once in the role of the defender, and here too he is in his element – he defends by combining his pieces in counterattack! Before looking at the game, we should like to outline briefly some of the main points about the art of defence.

Even in the opening we are required to solve defensive problems. At this stage they are characteristically preventive, e.g. strengthening the centre, getting the king safe, blockading opposing pawn chains and challenging on open files or diagonals. Often however, other quite unexpected tactical threats or breaks emerge.

Defensive skills become more significant with the transition into the middle game. Even when attacking, one has to look at defensive possibilities, i.e. one has to examine one's opponent's defensive alternatives, in order to try to get round them or eliminate them altogether. Attack and defence are closely interrelated. Well, what are the main defensive principles? One must:

(a) quickly spot any loss of tempo, recognise imminent danger, work out the appropriate defensive plan and deploy forces accordingly.

(b) defend as economically as possible, so that enough material remains with which to launch a counterattack.

(c) make it as difficult as possible for one's opponent to carry out his plan.

(d) reduce enemy attacking possibilities by simplification.

(e) transpose from critical positions into endgames which make it technically more difficult for one's opponent to exploit any material or positional advantage.

(f) attempt not only to ward off strong attacks, but also to look for a possible Achilles heel against which to launch a counterattack.

(g) recognise the available tactical finesses for defence and use them.

No doubt you have seen how these principles apply to the games up to now and gleaned much useful information from them. We should now like to offer two further drastic examples of defensive play.

Saved in the Nick of Time

I should like to put in one of Bronstein's observations as a foreword to the next game, '... there has been an enormous increase in the number of standard positions which more or less serve to direct players on their way. Thus nowadays we see that many positions, which were hitherto thought to be indefensible, can indeed be held successfully and in some cases can even offer counter chances. Yet to play this type of game requires firstly an ability to calculate accurately and secondly a willingness to leave one's own weaknesses to fate and to transfer the main scene of battle to another part of the board. Lasker typified this style of play – he was master at judging whether to swing the pendulum of battle to left or right. He did not neglect his own safety and yet he used to inflict ignominious defeat upon his opponents.'

Bronstein's words are pertinent to the following game. Tal had to choose between defending the queenside, which would mean being condemned to passive resistance, or to leave this aspect to fate and instead mount his own counterattack against the enemy king. Tal rightly chose the latter course and it was only with great difficulty that White managed to repel Tal's fierce attack and to save the game.

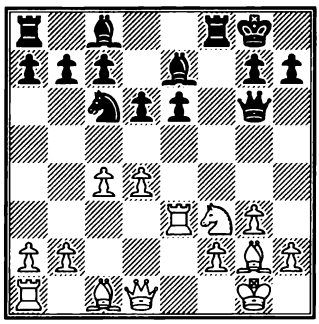
Game No. 37

Koblencs – Tal

Riga 1957

Dutch Defence

1 d4 e6 2 c4 f5 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 g3 ♗e7 5 ♗g2 0-0 6 0-0 d6 7 ♘c3 ♕e8 8 ♖e1 ♕g6 9 e4 fxe4 10 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 11 ♖xe4 ♘c6 A position well known to theorists. Of course 11 ... ♕xe4 is no good because of 12 ♘h4 and the queen is trapped. **12 ♖e3!**

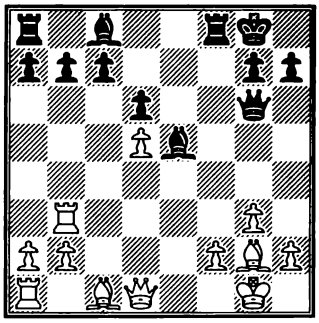


TAL

Position after 12 ♖e3!

KOBLENCS

The idea of this move comes to light after 12 ... e5 13 dxe5 ♗g4 14 exd6 ♗xd6, when Black's harmonious development seems to be worth a pawn. However, now that a diagonal onto Black's king has been weakened, the pawn sacrifice can be refuted as follows, 15 c5 ♗e7 16 b4 ♗f6 17 ♗b2, with a clear spatial advantage. In addition to the rook's prophylactic role (overprotection of f3), it also has an aggressive function – that of switching over to the queenside. **12 ... ♗f6 13 d5!? exd5 14 cxd5** The advance of the white queen's pawn greatly increases the scope of Black's king bishop, but White will batter away down the half-open c-file and believes that the pressure on Black's c7 will force him to play passively. **14 ... ♘e5 15 ♘xe5 ♗xe5 16 ♖b3**

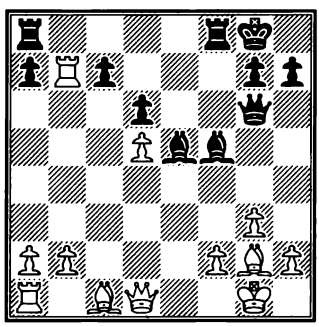


TAL

Position after 16 ♖b3

KOBLENCS

This is the positional idea behind White's set-up. Black's b-pawn needs to be protected, and, in order to develop the queenside, I thought he had to play 16 ... b6, after which I could see a rosy future for myself with 17 ♗e3 followed by ♖c1. After eventually playing the bishop to d4, I intended to double rooks on the bishop file and get tremendous pressure. However, at this point, Tal surprised me with a razor-sharp counterattack which left the lot of his queenside completely open to fate. **16 ... ♗f5! 17 ♖xb7** What would you play now?



TAL

Position after 17 ♖xb7

KOBLENCS

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17 ... ♗c2!

An excellent move which forces the queen to block in her own bishop. **18 ♕d2** Once more we have a chance to find a 'Tal' move.

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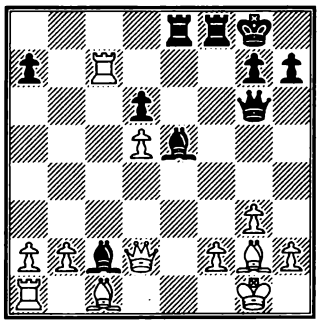
18 ... ♖ae8!

He gives up another pawn for the full mobility of his pieces. **19 ♖xc7**



TAL

Position after 19 ♖xc7

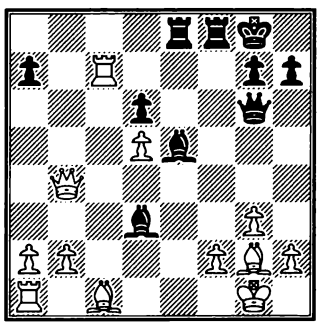
KOBLENCS

19 ... ♗d3 Now the unpleasant 20 ... ♗d4 threatens.

Question 81 **What is wrong with ... ♗d4 at once?**

20 ♕b4

Now it is your choice again.



TAL

Position after 20 ♕b4

KOBLENCS

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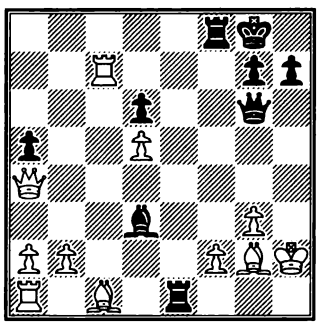
20 ... a5!

The queen will now be diverted from her defence of the invasion square e1. It was tempting to play 20 ... ♖xf2, if 21 ♔xf2 ♕f6+ 22 ♗f4 ♗d4+ 23 ♔f3 ♗e2 mate, but 22 ♗f3! ♗d4+ 23 ♔g2 leads nowhere for Black.
21 ♕a4

Question 82 **Why can't 21 ♕xa5 be played?**

21 ... ♗xg3! 22 hxg3 ♖e1+ 23 ♔h2



TAL

Position after 23 ♔h2

KOBLENCS

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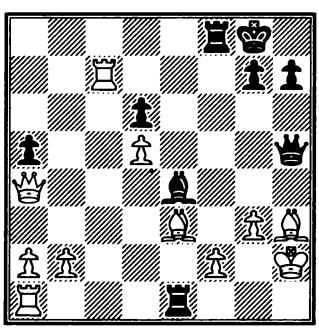
23 ... ♗e4!

An excellent obstructive move – White's queen is cut off from defence at h4. If 24 ♗xe4? there follows simply 24 ... ♕h5+ 25 ♔g2 ♕h1 mate.
24 ♗e3! ♕h5+ 25 ♗h3



TAL

Position after 25 ♗h3

KOBLENCS

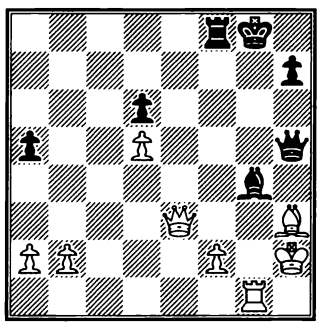
25 ... ♖xe3!

White's position seems to be in ruins. Too many pieces threaten his king and naturally he cannot play 26 fxe3 because of ♕e2+ followed by mate. Yet now the rook on the seventh rank comes to the rescue in the nick of time. **26 ♖xg7+! ♔xg7**

Question 83 **Why not 26 ... ♔h8 refusing the bait?**

27 ♕d4+

This double attack enables White to move the queen over to defend the threatened area, with a gain of tempo. **27 ... ♔g8 28 ♕xe3 ♗f5** The last attempt to play for a win. **29 g4 ♗xg4 30 ♖g1**

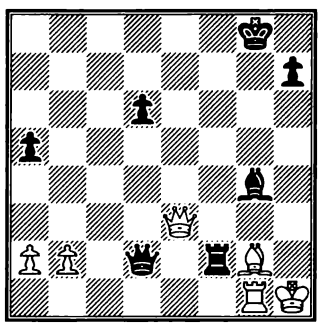


TAL

Position after 30 ♖g1

KOBLENCS

30 ... ♖xf2+ This is the third rook on offer in this game, but it is no more than a warning shot. **31 ♔h1 ♕xd5+ 32 ♗g2 ♕h5+ 33 ♗h3 ♕d5+ 34 ♗g2 ♕d2**



TAL

Position after 34 ... ♕d2

KOBLENCS

The last trap. If 35 ♕e8+ there follows 35 ... ♔g7 36 ♕e7+ ♖f7 and the threat of 37 ... ♕h6+ is unstoppable. **The exchange of queens leads quickly to the draw. 35 ♕xd2 ♖xd2 36 ♗f3 h5 37 ♗xg4 hxg4 38 ♖xg4+ ♔f7 39 ♖a4 Drawn.**

With Open Visors

In the next game both players exhibit unreserved aggression. White leads off, as is his prerogative, and very soon a battle of life and death rages on. At first White's rook seems to have broken through, but Black succeeds in beating off the danger. This is followed by another wave of attack from White, which is again pushed back by ingenious counter measures. Both players constantly take risks, but forego other temptations, and this is what makes the encounter such a dramatic and tinglingly exciting one.

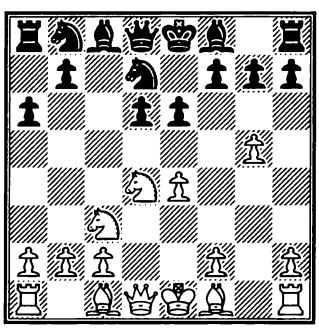
Game No. 38

Ljubojević – Tal

Las Palmas 1975

Sicilian Defence

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 d6 6 g4 The prelude to the Keres attack, which leads to a complex game. The omniscient opening theorists have as yet not been able to make a final judgement about its worth. **6 ... a6 7 g5 ♘fd7**

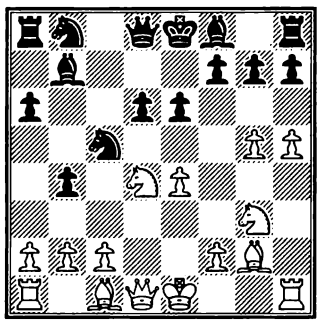


TAL

Position after 7 ... ♘fd7

LJUBOJEVIC

8 h4 It is one of those positions in which a player finds himself undecided. He has to make a decision on whether to continue his attack regardlessly (as happened in the game) or whether to prevent the traditional Sicilian pawn thrust (... b5) by playing the restraining move 8 a4. In this case theorists once more shelter behind the diplomatic evaluation, 'with highly complicated play', after 8 a4 ♘c6 9 ♗e3 ♘de5 10 ♘b3 ♘a5 11 ♘xa5 ♕xa5 12 f4 ♘c6 13 ♗g2 h6. **8 ... b5 9 h5 b4** An exciting pawn race. Black could also have played ... ♗b7 first. **10 ♘ce2 ♗b7 11 ♗g2 ♘c5 12 ♘g3**

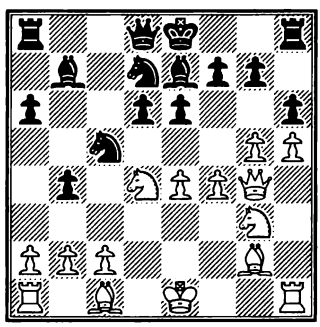


TAL

Position after 12 ♘g3

LJUBOJEVIC

12 ... ♘bd7 We have already mentioned that the most active way to meet a flank attack is to counterattack in the centre. However, in this particular case it would be unwise to follow this general rule, as an unfavourable position would ensue after 12 ... d5 13 g6 dxe4 14 gxf7+, and yet this might have been the best practical chance. **13 f4 ♗e7 14 ♕g4 h6**



TAL

Position after 14 ... h6

LJUBOJEVIC

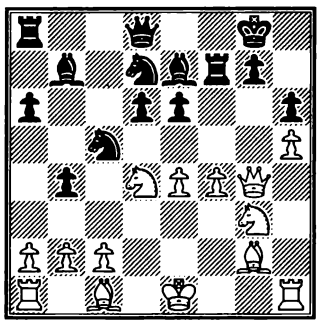
15 g6 Is the provocative 14 ... h6 not refuted by 15 gxh6. What do you think?

* * * * * *

It would indeed transpose into a lovely **combination** after 15 gxh6 ♘f6 16 ♕xg7 ♖g8 17 ♕xg8+! ♘xg8 18 **h7**, but Black can simply play 15 ... gxh6 and White has achieved **nothing.**

15 ... 0-0 16 gxf7+

He must exchange immediately, otherwise Black can close up the position with 16 ... f5. **16 ... ♖xf7**



TAL

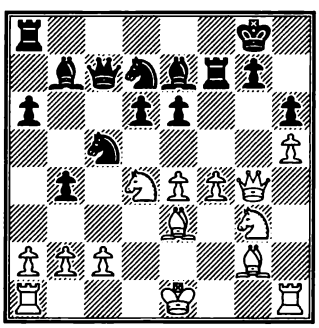
Position after 16 ... ♖xf7

LJUBOJEVIC

17 ♗e3

Question 84 **Why not now 17 ♘xe6 ?**

17 ... ♕c7



TAL

Position after 17 ... ♕c7

LJUBOJEVIC

18 0-0!

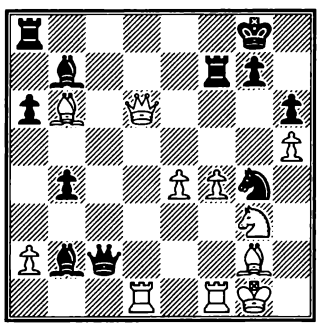
It is surprising that White castles short, despite the loose kingside position. However, his pieces are so strongly placed that they offer the king adequate protection. If he had played the thematic 18 0-0-0 then Black would have got counterplay, either by 18 ... ♖c8 or as Tal suggested by 18 ... ♘f6 19 ♕g6 ♘cd7 (threatening ... ♘f8!) 20 ♘xe6 ♕c4 21 ♘f5 ♕xe6 22 ♘xh6+ ♔f8 23 ♗h3 ♕xa2!

18 ... ♗f6

Question 85 **Why not now 18 ... ♘f6 ?**

19 ♘xe6 ♘xe6 20 ♕xe6 ♗xb2 21 ♖ad1

21 ♖ab1! would have been much stronger. **21 ... ♘f6 22 ♕xd6 ♘g4 23 ♗b6 ♕xc2**



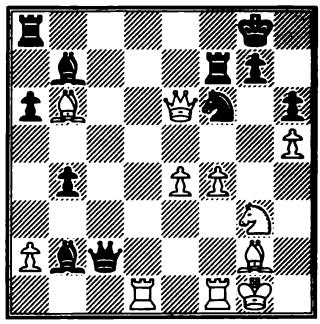
TAL

Position after 23 ... ♕xc2

LJUBOJEVIC

24 ♕e6

White feels that his material advantage is in danger of slipping away and he makes a dubious attempt to win by force. According to Tal, 24 ♖d2 would have been more profitable. After 24 ... ♕c3 25 ♘e2 ♕f6 26 ♕xf6 ♖xf6 (not 26 ... ♗xf6 because of 27 e5) 27 ♗a5! Black would still have many difficulties. However, after 24 ♕xb4 ♖xf4! 25 ♖d2 ♕c3 26 ♕xc3 ♖xf1+ chances would be about equal. **24 ... ♘f6**



TAL

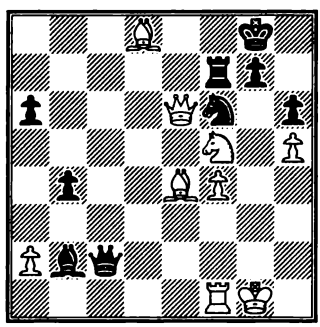
Position after 24 ... ♘f6

LJUBOJEVIC

25 ♘f5 What would have been best after 25 ♕b3?

* * * * * *

Not 25 ... ♕xb3, which would be better for White after 26 ... axb3, but 25 ... ♖c8! with equality. **25 ... ♖e8 26 ♖d8 ♖xd8 27 ♗xd8 ♗xe4 28 ♗xe4** How should Black now capture the bishop?



TAL

Position after 28 ♗xe4

LJUBOJEVIC

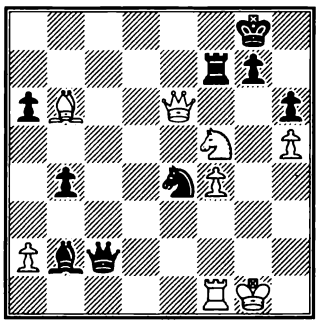
* * * * * *

28 ... ♘xe4! Only with the knight. I trust you didn't fall into the other capture, with the queen.

Question 86 **What happens then?**

29 ♗b6!

Question 87 **Why not the obvious 29 ♕e8+ ?**



TAL

Position after 29 ♗b6

LJUBOJEVIC

Now what should Black play?

* * * * * *

29 ... ♕d3!

At last Black is able to exploit the exposed position of White's king, and force a draw by perpetual check. **30 ♖e1 ♘d6! 31 ♘xd6 ♕g3+ 32 ♔h1** 32 ♔f1 ♕xf4+! **32 ... ♕f3+ 33 ♔g1 Drawn.**

A Difficult Draw

In the next game, ex-world champion Botvinnik outplayed Tal positionally, having created a serious, permanent weakness in White's camp. Tal showed himself to be a good, tenacious defender; he made life as difficult as possible for his opponent and skilfully managed to use his tactics to get off lightly.

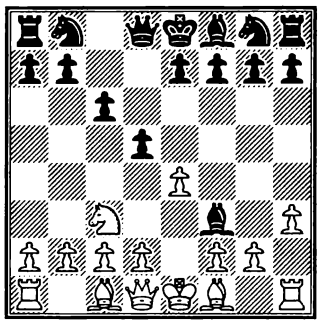
Game No. 39

Tal – Botvinnik

Game 3, World Championship match, Moscow 1960

Caro-Kann Defence

1 e4 c6 2 ♘c3 d5 3 ♘f3 ♗g4 4 h3 ♗xf3



BOTVINNIK

Position after 4 ... ♗xf3

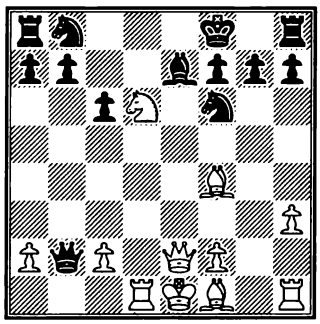
TAL

5 gxf3!? This move was severely criticised as defying chess logic, yet in simple positional terms it has a couple of things in its favour; it strengthens the pawn centre and it opens the g-file. However, in the game, Tal selected the move for psychological reasons, which were based on the knowledge that Botvinnik belongs to the group of grandmasters who like to prepare their opening systems thoroughly beforehand, in analysis and training games.

By choosing the text move, we assumed that a 'heretical' move of this kind would not have been included in Botvinnik's programme and would thus disconcert him. Indeed, when Tal quickly recaptured with the pawn, his great opponent sank into fifteen minutes troubled thought, whilst his second, Goldberg, who was sitting next to me at the referee's table, looked quite agitated and kept muttering 'What a bombshell!'

5 ... e6 In his book on the match, Tal made the following instructive observation, 'If Black had tried to refute my bizarre move immediately by the direct 5 ... e5, this would illustrate the important general rule that bishops spring into action if a position is opened up – in this case, it would particularly apply to the white-squared bishop, because Black's has been removed. This is also shown in the following original game which I, as

White, played against my trainer: **5 ... e5 6 f4 dxe4 7 fxe5 ♕d4 8 ♕e2 ♕xe5 9 d4 ♕xd4 10 ♘xe4 ♗e7 11 ♗f4 ♕xb2 12 ♖d1 ♘f6 13 ♘d6+ ♔f8**



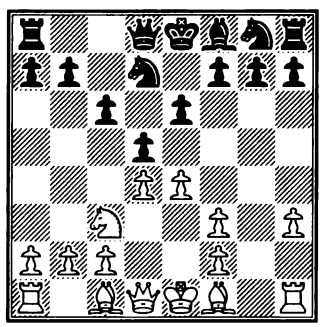
KOBLENC

Position after 13 ... ♔f8

TAL

14 ♕xe7+!? ♔xe7 15 ♘f5+ ♔e8! (not 15 ... ♔e6 because of 16 ♘xg7+ ♔e7 17 ♗d6+ ♔d8 18 ♗a3+) **16 ♘xg7+ ♔f8 17 ♗d6+! ♔xg7 18 ♖g1+ ♘g4!** (weaker was 18 ... ♔h6 19 ♗f4+ ♔h5 20 ♗e2+ ♔h4 21 ♗g3+ ♔xh3 22 ♗f1+ ♔g4 23 ♗e5+ ♔f5 24 ♗xb2) **19 ♖xg4+ ♔f6 20 ♖f4+ ♔g7** drawn by perpetual check'.

6 d4 ♘d7

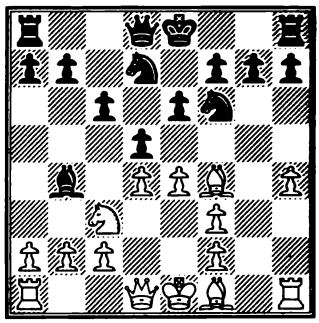


BOTVINNIK

Position after 6 ... ♘d7

TAL

7 ♗f4 In the pre-match analysis we had planned 7 ♗e3 followed by 8 ♕d2 and castles long. In our analysis, when Tal played the bishop to f4, this move came in for criticism and Tal ruefully put the bishop back on e3. Yet, lo and behold, in this game Tal then quite unthinkingly developed the bishop on f4! Here is an instance of some inexplicable mental phenomenon which chess players term a 'finger-slip'. **7 ... ♗b4! 8 h4?** White expected 8 ... ♘e7 and intended to develop the rook on h3 after playing 9 h5. Better, as Tal suggested, was 8 a3 ♗a5 9 b4 ♗c7 10 ♗e3. From now on, the thinking time will be inserted in brackets after every move, as this contains some interesting information. **8 ... ♘gf6** (0.36)

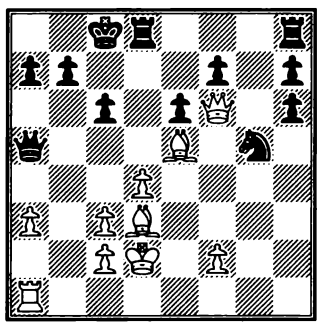


BOTVINNIK

Position after 8 ... ♘gf6

TAL

9 e5 (0.47) 'After this move, White's position is strategically lost. When I played 8 h4, I intended to go in for the following gambit: 8 ... ♘gf6 9 a3 ♗xc3+ 10 bxc3 dxe4 11 fxe4 ♘xe4 12 ♕f3 ♕a5 13 ♖h3 ♘df6. This should then be followed by 14 h5 0-0-0 15 h6 gxh6 16 ♗e5 ♘g5 17 ♕xf6 ♘xh3 18 ♔d2 ♘g5 19 ♗d3. I thought White would have enough compensation for the exchange sacrifice, but then I suddenly saw to my horror that ...'



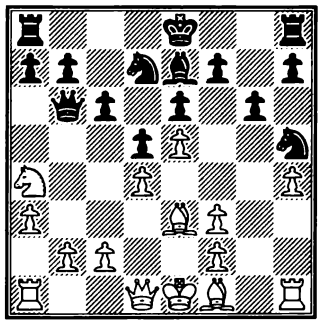
BOTVINNIK

Analysis after 19 ♗d3

TAL

Question 88 **What did Tal suddenly see?**

'What should I do? 9 ♕e2 or 9 ♕d3 did not seem too aesthetically satisfying, so I reluctantly decided to play the anti-positional text-move.' **9 ... ♘h5** (0.40) **10 ♗g5** (0.48) **♕a5** (1.00) **11 ♗d2** (0.51) **♕b6** (1.03) **12 a3** (0. 53) **♗e7** (1.04) **13 ♗e3** (0.58) **g6!** (1.13) **14 ♘a4** (1.13) An attempt to breathe some life into the position. If now 14 ... ♕a5+ then 15 c3 b5 16 ♘c5 ♗xc5 17 b4! with an improved position for White. However, Botvinnik did not allow himself to be swayed from his plan of capturing the weak h-pawn.



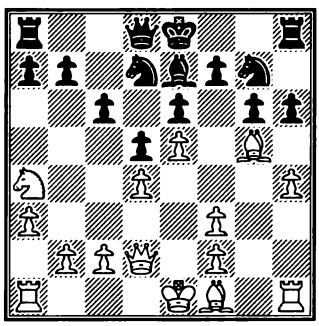
BOTVINNIK

Position after 14 ♘a4

TAL

14 ... ♕d8 (1.18) **15 ♕d2** (1.16) **♘g7!** (1.21)

The immediate 15 ... ♗xh4 could be met by 16 ♗h6 followed by ♗h3. **16 ♗g5** (1.19) **h6!** (1.28)

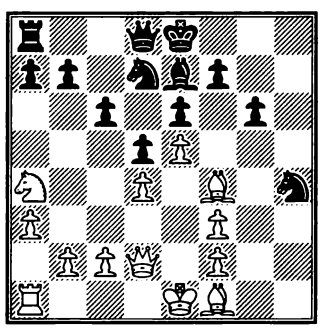


BOTVINNIK

Position after 16 ... h6!

TAL

A fine move. It rids White of his concern for the weak rook pawn, but provokes an exchange which is in Black's favour. **17 ♗xh6** (1.28) 'After 17 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 18 ♕b4 b6 Black would have the superior position, so White's attempt to maintain the tension is understandable.' (Tal) **17 ... ♘f5** (1.29) **18 ♗f4** (1.30) **♖xh4** (1.31) **19 ♖xh4** (1.35) **♘xh4** (1.31)

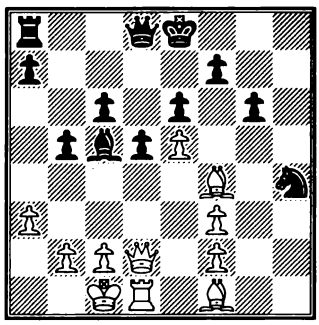


BOTVINNIK

Position after 19 ... ♘xh4

TAL

20 0-0-0 (1.35) There **is no point in defending f3**. If 20 ♕e3 then 20 ... ♗g5. **20 ... b5** (1.37) **Black is in no hurry to capture** the weak pawn on f3. White had hoped to be **able to harass Black's king** after 20 ... ♘xf3 21 ♕e3 ♘h4 22 ♗h3 ♕a5 23 ♗g5. **21 ♘c5** (1.42) If 21 ♘c3 then 21 ... ♕a5 or the very strong 21 ... **a5 would build up an attack. 21 ... ♘xc5** (1.40) **22 dxc5** (1.42) **♗xc5** (1.43)

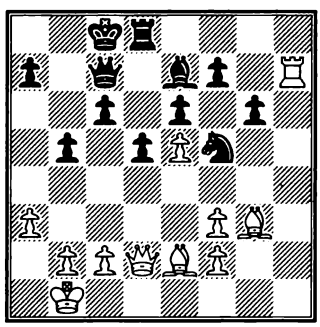


BOTVINNIK

Position after 22 ... ♗xc5

TAL

23 ♗e2 (1.48) The position has become somewhat more open: White's pieces are a bit more active and the rook threatens to occupy the h-file. This would not be enough to give White equality, with precise play by Black, but the first signs of time shortage were appearing and this offers chances to salvage even poor positions. The player with the weaker position should never give up hope of saving it by posing constant problems for his opponent. Tal set about doing this in the following way. **23 ... ♗e7** (1.48) **24 ♔b1** (1.50) **♕c7** (1.56) **25 ♖h1** (1.52) **0-0-0** (1.58) **26 ♗g3** (1.54) **♘f5** (2.00) **27 ♖h7** (1.54) White's first active move!



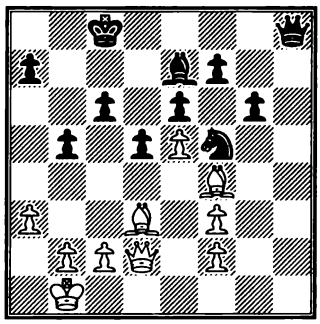
BOTVINNIK

Position after 27 ♖h7

TAL

27 ... ♖f8 (2.04) Safe, but too passive. After 27 ... ♗c5! followed by ♖d7, Black could have set his queenside pawns in motion. **28 ♗f4** (1.55) **♕d8** (2.12) **29 ♗d3** (2.00) **♖h8 30 ♖xh8** (2.12) **♕xh8** (2.19) Black has carried

out his plan, but in doing so he has underestimated his opponent's counter chances. What are they?



BOTVINNIK

Position after 30 ... ♕xh8

TAL

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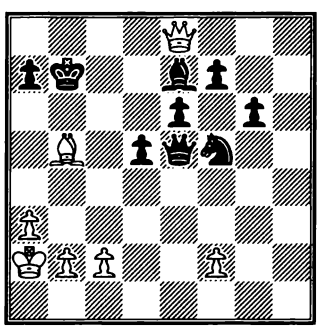
31 ♕a5! (2.13)

There then followed **31 ... ♕h1+** (2.25) **32 ♔a2** (2.13) **♕xf3** (2.28) **33 ♕a6+** (2.14) **♔b8** (2.29) **34 ♕xc6!** (2.18) **♕xf4** (2.29) **35 ♗xb5** (2.19) **♕xe5** (2.29) **36 ♕e8+** (2.20) **♔b7** (2.29)



BOTVINNIK

Position after 36 ... ♔b7

TAL

At this point Tal spent seven minutes analysing a variation. See if you can find out which one it was.

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Tal's attention was diverted by the move **37 ♗a6+! ♔xa6.**

> *Question 89* **Tal says that this is forced. What would happen after 37 ... ♔c7 instead?**

38 ♕c6+ ♔a5 39 c3 ♗xa3? 40 ♔xa3 ♕d6+ 41 b4+ winning for White.

> *Question 90* **How can Black improve on this line?**

'In view of my opponent's shortage of time, the bishop sacrifice could have offered some winning chances. However, White's position had been so bad throughout the game, that I was not now willing to tempt fate. So we agreed a **draw** after **37 ♕c6+ ♔b8.**

A Positional Struggle

In many of the previous games, Tal's strategy consisted in establishing a positional advantage as quickly as possible by means of an energetic attack on the king. In the next game we see a different picture: now, we have a battle for the smallest positional advantage, for the capture of an important strategic point, or the best piece set-up, or an advantage in space, or a favourable endgame. There are a number of non-committal moves which are designed to provoke microscopic weaknesses in the enemy position or perhaps to render an opposing piece ineffective. Of course there is also the question of king safety, but this problem is incidental – the main focus is upon a tense struggle for positional advantages.

You will have seen from Tal's attacking games how he tends to base his ultimate sacrificial combinations upon positional preparation, but here the battle takes on a more peaceful, perhaps compact tone. You will witness a finely balanced positional struggle in which the three stages of the game

(opening, middle and endgame) are fully enjoyed by the protagonists. You will get an impression of how tough, nerve-racking and complex such games are – particularly when the world crown is at stake.

We again include the amount of time used by each player, in order to illustrate the drama of the battle.

Game No. 40

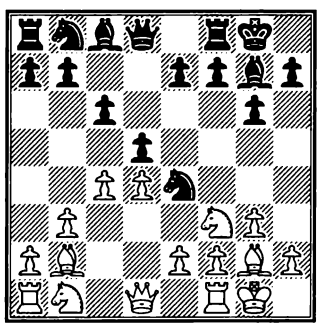
Tal – Botvinnik

Game 11, World Championship match, Moscow 1960

Reti Opening

1 ♘f3 (0.01)

This move was chosen to surprise Botvinnik a little. Tal did not intend to establish a specific opening advantage, but he proposed to go in for a long complicated game, designed to delay the main action until the fifth hour, as we had noticed that during this hour Botvinnik's iron self-assurance seemed to waver. Perhaps this is a cruel psychological idea, but one has no other choice in World Championship matches – one has to exploit every known weakness in one's opponent, so we did this to the full! **1 ... ♘f6** (0.01) **2 g3** (0.02) **g6** (0.03) **3 ♗g2** (0.02) **♗g7** (0.03) **4 0-0** (0.02) **0-0** (0.04) **5 c4** (0.03) **c6** (0.08) **6 b3** (0.04) **♘e4** (0.23) **7 d4** (0.05) **d5** (0.23) **8 ♗b2** (0.05)



BOTVINNIK

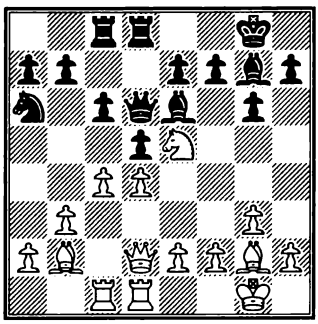
Position after 8 ♗b2

TAL

8 ... ♗e6 (0.26) White finds a positional refutation of this move. From now on, Black has to battle on with constant difficulties. Black ought to

have played 8 ... a5, intending to start operations on the queenside. **9 ♘bd2** (0.16) **♘xd2** (0.43) **10 ♕xd2!** (0.20) This is the point. If 10 ♘xd2 Black could seize the initiative with 10 ... c5. **10 ... ♘a6** (0.51) Black would be worse if he accepted the pawn sacrifice by playing 10 ... dxc4 11 ♘g5 cxb3 12 ♘xe6 fxe6 13 axb3. White has the bishop pair and Black, in return, has but an isolated doubled pawn! This is now followed by positional manoeuvres which result in much better prospects for White. **11 ♖ac1** (0.21) **♕d6** (1.01) **12 ♘e5** (0.37) **♖fd8** (1.05) **13 ♖fd1** (0.38) **♖ac8** (1.08)

The opening is now at an end. How is White to cause Black further problems? One possible plan is to end the central tension by playing 14 c5 and after 14 ... ♕b8 15 b4 to get a pawn grip on the queenside. Yet, against this, Black would have the following typical counterplay, 15 ... f6 16 ♘d3 ♗f5 followed by ... e5! What do you think Tal played next?



BOTVINNIK

Position after 13 ... ♖ac8

TAL

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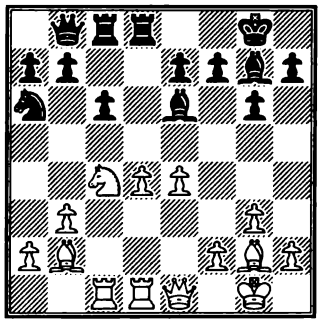
14 ♕a5! (0.46)

The queen is effective here. It would be a mistake to challenge the queen immediately by 14 ... ♕b4, because of 15 ♘xc6, although according to Tal after 15 ... bxc6 16 ♕xa6 dxc4 17 ♗a3 ♕b6 18 ♕xb6 axb6 19 bxc4 it would not be very easy to make something of the extra pawn. As 15 ♗a3 also threatened, Botvinnik decided to give up the centre, upon the correct assumption that the consequent cramped position would offer sufficient defensive possibilities. **14 ... dxc4** (1.15) **15 ♘xc4** (0.50) **♕c7** (1.22) **16 ♕e1** (0.55) **♕b8** (1.27) **17 e4** (0.57)

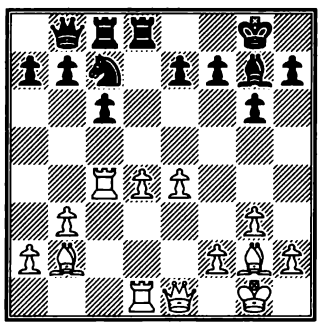


BOTVINNIK

Position after 17 e4

TAL

The first tangible positional consequence – White controls the centre! **17 ... ♗xc4** (1.33) **18 ♖xc4** (0.58) Weaker would be 18 bxc4 because of 18 ... c5 19 e5 cxd4. This variation illustrates that a pawn centre can also serve as a target and one always has to be on guard for undermining manoeuvres (c6-c5!). **18 ... ♘c7** (1.34) In order to attack White's d-pawn by either ♘e6 or ♘b5.



BOTVINNIK

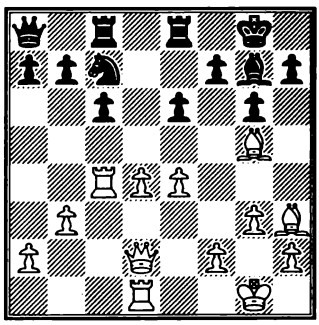
Position after 18 ... ♘c7

TAL

19 ♗h3 (1.15) Originally White intended to play 19 ♗c1! and then after 19 ... ♘b5, to play 20 ♗h3. However, he did not relish the fact that after the exchange sacrifice 20 ... ♘xd4 21 ♗xc8! ♘f3+ 22 ♔h1 ♕xc8 23 ♖xd8+ (not 23 ♕e2 ♖xd1+ 24 ♕xd1 ♕h3!) 23 ... ♕xd8 24 ♕e2 ♘d4 25 ♕d3 e5, the advantage would not be easy to realise. Yet this is a false conception! If material gain is the logical continuation, one could meet technical difficulties, but one should not waver out of fear.

'Black was not so badly off that I could afford luxuries of this kind. I thought I could get more by playing the text move, but the further course of the game proved that a restricted position, which has no visible

weaknesses, is difficult to get at. **Botvinnik** is equal here' (Tal). **19 ... e6** (1.37) **20 ♗c1** (1.15) **♕a8! (1.49) Carefully avoiding** the possible pin after 21 ♗f4 and preparing 21 ... b5! **21 ♗g5 (1.19) ♖e8** (1.53) **22 ♕d2** (1.23)

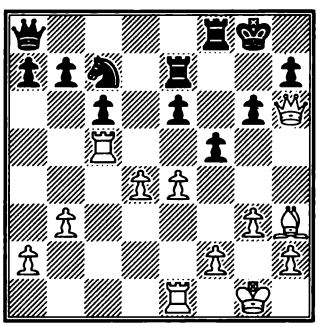


BOTVINNIK

Position after 22 ♕d2

TAL

22 ... f5! (2.01) White is in a dilemma. 23 e5 would free the excellent square d5 for the black knight, and to maintain the tension by playing 23 f3 would be met by 23 ... ♘b5 with the threat of 24 ... ♘d6. Tal decided to change direction and give up the bishop pair, thus choosing a third possibility – the exchange of the black bishop which was exerting pressure on the centre. **23 ♗h6** (1.36) **♗xh6** (2.04) **24 ♕xh6** (1.36) **♖e7** (2.05) **25 ♖e1** (1.38) **♖f8** (2.08) **26 ♖c5** (2.03)

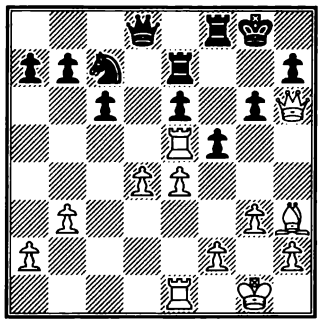


BOTVINNIK

Position after 26 ♖c5

TAL

'At this stage, thanks to Botvinnik's well conceived defence, I did not think I had any advantage, so I decided to concoct a tactical skirmish in view of the oncoming time trouble. In any case, I should have to put up with the weakness on d4.' (Tal). **26 ... ♕d8!** (2.13) **27 ♖e5** (2.02)

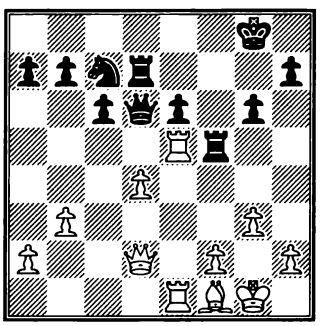


BOTVINNIK

Position after 27 ♖e5

TAL

27 ... ♖ef7! (2.14) Black took his opponent at his word and did not capture on d4. In fact White would have been better after 27 ... ♕xd4 28 exf5 gxf5 29 ♗xf5 ♖ef7 30 ♖5e4 ♕f6 31 ♕xf6 ♖xf6 32 ♗xe6+ ♘xe6 33 ♖xe6 ♖xf2 34 ♖e7. However, after the text move, ... ♕xd4 is now a real threat. **28 ♕d2** (2.02) **♕d6** (2.15) **29 ♗f1** (2.05) Regrouping tactics – the bishop intends to pressurise Black's king pawn from c4. **29 ... ♖d7** (2.21) Black doesn't take this lying down and in turn puts pressure on d4. Now White has to concede the square d5. **30 exf5** (2.05) **♖xf5** (2.21)



BOTVINNIK

Position after 30 ... ♖xf5

TAL

31 ♖5e4 (2.09) 'Again intending to create complications – the opponent is in time trouble! However, it seemed preferable to play 31 ♖xf5 exf5 32 ♗c4+ ♔g7 33 ♕c3, because of 33 ... ♕xd4 34 ♖e7+ ♔f8 35 ♕xd4 ♖xd4 36 ♖xc7.

Also after 31 ... gxf5 32 ♕g5+ ♖g7 33 ♕f6 ♖g6 34 ♕e5 ♕xe5 35 dxe5 White's position would be the more preferable' (Tal).

31 ... ♖f6? (2.21)

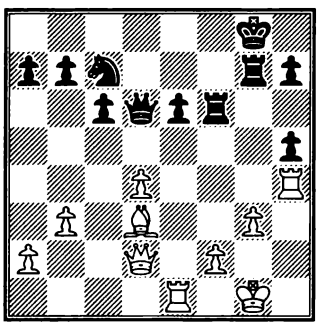
Now we see the problem of the fifth hour! Was it increasing time pressure (now only nine minutes for nine moves), was it tiredness, flagging concentration? Or had the constant positional nagging of his young opponent worn him down? Maybe one, maybe another, perhaps all of them.

Question 91 **Which was the best move and why?**

The text move turns out to be too passive – White now seizes the initiative. How does he do it?

* * * * * *

32 h4! (2.11) ♔**g7** (2.23) **33 h5** (2.11) **gxh5** (2.24) **34** ♖**h4** (2.13) ♔**g8** (2.27) **35** ♗**d3** (2.16) ♖**g7** (2.27)



BOTVINNIK

Position after 35 ... ♖g7

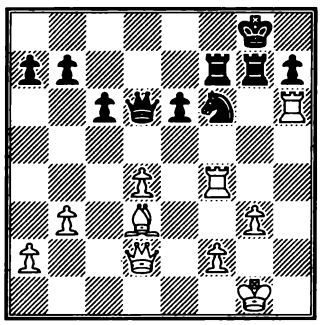
TAL

* * * * * *

36 ♖**e5!** (2.16)

A fine move. This not only protects the prospective invasion on g3 but also more importantly aims the rook towards h5. **36 ... ♖ff7** (2.28) **37** ♕**h6** (2.17) ♕**e7** (2.28) **38** ♖**exh5** (2.19) ♘**d5!** (2.28) **39** ♕**d2!** (2.25)

Elementary! When the heavy pieces are tripled, the queen should not take the lead. It should be left to the lower ranks to attack the target initially. **39 ... ♘f6** (2.28) **40 ♖h6** (2.26) **♕d6** (2.29) **41 ♖f4** (2.29)



BOTVINNIK

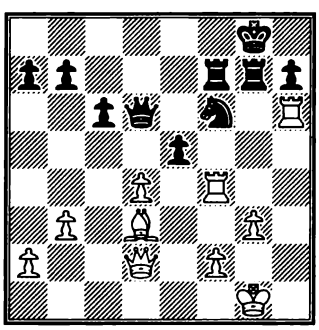
Position after 41 ♖f4

TAL

Let us again quote from Tal, in his book on the match, 'I played this obvious move very quickly, so that Black would have to find a move at the board. I think that my decision was justified and was not unsportsmanlike.'

The game was to be adjourned, and Botvinnik sealed his reply after forty minutes thought. The knight is threatened. Black can defend it with 41 ... ♕e7, 41 ... ♕f8 41 ... ♕d8 or 41 ... e5, and moreover, the knight can move to any one of four squares. My sealed move stratagem had not turned out particularly well because throughout the night and all the next day until the resumption all variations had to be analysed, whilst Botvinnik only had to analyse the possible replies to one move. However, after thorough analysis, Koblencs and I came to the conclusion that the position was won for White. Here are a few bits of our analysis – first we tried out the active continuations:

(a) Strange variations arise after 41 ... e5.



BOTVINNIK

Analysis after 41 ... e5

TAL

The original plan of 42 ♖f5 would be refuted, as was established the following morning, by 42 ... ♕xd4 (threatening ... ♖xg3+). After 42 dxe5 ♕xe5 White has a tempting exchange sacrifice at his disposal, 43 ♖hxf6!? 43 ... ♖xf6 44 ♗c4+ ♖gf7! 45 ♕d8+ ♔g7 46 ♗xf7 ♔xf7 (not 46 ... ♖xf4 47 ♕g8+) 47 ♕d7+ ♕e7 48 ♖xf6+ ♔xf6 49 ♕xe7+ ♔xe7. The ensuing pawn endgame seems to be good for White, but a closer analysis convinced us that Black has enough defensive possibilities. So it was finally decided after 42 dxe5 ♕xe5 to play 43 ♖f5!. 43 ... ♕a1+ would then lead to a lost position, and if 43 ... ♕d4, then 44 ♖hxf6 ♖xg3+ 45 ♔f1 ♖xd3 46 ♕g5+ ♔h8 47 ♖xf7 wins.

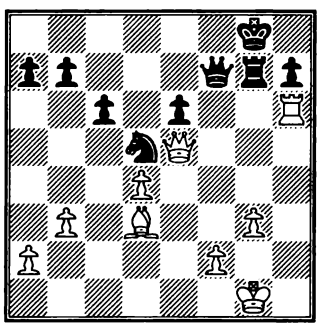
Question 92 **How would you deal with 41 ... ♘g4, intending to attack the f-pawn?**

(b) Passive moves like 41 ... ♕e7 or 41 ... ♕d8 are refuted by 42 ♕c2 and 42 ♕e3. Black then loses either his e-pawn or h-pawn, without compensation.

(c) The greatest difficulties seem to appear after 41 ... ♘d7 42 ♖xf7 ♔xf7, but even then we came to the conclusion that White's attack must prevail after 43 ♗xh7 c5 44 ♕e2!

(d) We did not analyse Botvinnik's move, but it does not present White with any great difficulties.'

41 ... ♕f8 (3.11) **42 ♕e3** (2.39) **♘d5** (3.11) **43 ♖xf7** (2.40) **♕xf7** (3.11) **44 ♕e5!** (2.41)



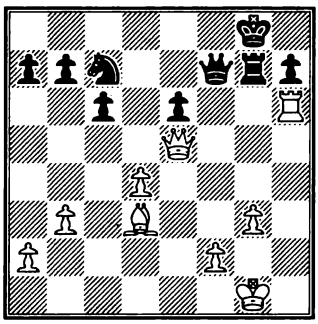
BOTVINNIK

Position after 44 ♕e5!

TAL

There has been a transition into an endgame which sporadically assumes middle game characteristics. The constant problem for the player with the

better position is how best to realise his advantage technically. White has this problem here and it seemed to him that he would not gain enough for his great advantage by transposing into the endgame with 44 ♕xe6 ♕xe6 45 ♖xe6 ♖g4 46 ♗c4 ♔f7. **44 ... ♘c7** (3.12) What would you play now?



BOTVINNIK

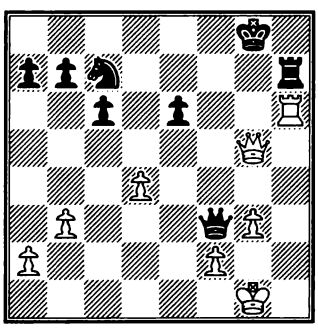
Position after 44 ... ♘c7

TAL

* * * * * *

45 ♕c5! (2.49)

Excellent! Whilst his opponent has to set up a cramped defence of his kingside, the white queen journeys to the opposite flank. **45 ... ♕f3** (3.15) If 45 ... a6 46 ♕b6 then 46 ... ♘e8 does not work because of 47 ♖xe6, and after 46 ... ♘d5 47 ♕d8+ ♕f8, then the thematic decoy sacrifice 48 ♗xh7+! wins. **46 ♗xh7+** (2.57) **♖xh7** (3.17) **47 ♕g5+** (2.58)

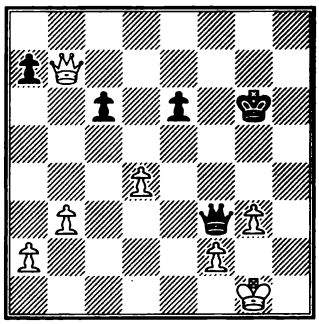


BOTVINNIK

Position after 47 ♕g5+

TAL

47 ... ♔h8 (3.18) If 47 ... ♖g7, then the decoy sacrifice again follows, this time with the rook, 48 ♕d8+ ♕f8 49 ♖h8+. **48 ♕d8+** (2.58) ♔**g7** (3.18) **49 ♖xh7+** (2.59) ♔**xh7** (3.18) **50 ♕xc7+** (2.58) ♔**g6** (3.20) **51 ♕xb7** (2.58)

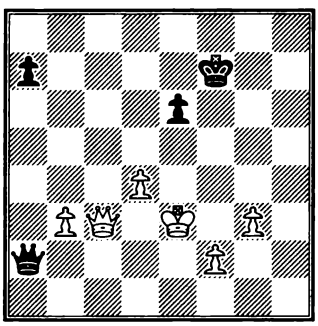


BOTVINNIK

Position after 51 ♕xb7

TAL

With the aid of a little combination, White has won two pawns. There now follows the technical realisation of this advantage. **51 ... ♕e4 52 ♕a6!** To capture a third pawn greedily, by playing 52 ♕xa7 ♕e1+ 53 ♔g2 ♕e4+ 54 ♔h2 ♕f3 55 d5 cxd5 would give Black a dangerous passed pawn. **52 ... ♕e1+ 53 ♔g2 ♕e4+ 54 ♔f1 ♕b1+ 55 ♔e2 ♕c2+ 56 ♔f3 ♕f5+ 57 ♔e3 ♕g5+ 58 ♔e2 ♕h5+ 59 ♔d2 ♔f6 60 ♕xc6 ♕a5+ 61 ♕c3 ♕xa2+ 62 ♔e3 ♔f7**



BOTVINNIK

Position after 62 ... ♔f7

TAL

63 d5! Now White gets two connected passed pawns. **63 ... exd5 64 ♕c7+ ♔f6 65 ♕c6+ ♔e7 66 ♕xd5 ♕a1 67 ♕e4+ ♔f7 68 ♔f4 ♕c1+ 69 ♔g4 ♕a1 70 ♕d5+ ♔f8 71 ♔f5 ♕b1+ 72 ♔f6 Resigns**. At last! That was a tough struggle!

Answers to Questions

1 **13 ... exf4** would allow the typical knight sacrifice **14 ♘d5!** after which 14 ... cxd5 15 exd5+ opens the e-file with mating threats, or **14 ... ♘d7** leads to **15 ♘g5 ♗e5 16 ♘c7+ ♕xc7 17 ♗xf7+ ♔d8 18 ♘e6 mate**.

2 If **21 ... ♔d8 22 ♗h5 ♗e8** Tal had planned **23 ♖xe6! fxe6** (if Black declines the sacrifice, the rook retreats and Black's wrecked pawn position spells defeat) **24 ♘xe6+ ♔d7 25 ♘xf8+ ♔d8 26 ♖xd6+ ♗xd6 27 ♘e6 mate**.

3 After **11 ... a6** there could follow **12 ♗xc6 ♗xc6 13 ♘xc6 ♕xg5 14 ♕d6!** (almost a patent of Tal's!) **14 ... ♘e7 15 ♖fd1! ♘xc6 16 ♕d7+ ♔f8 17 ♕xb7** winning.

4 If **12 ... ♗e7** as in the Fischer – Rubinetti game, after **13 ♘c6 ♕c7 14 ♘xe7 ♕xe7 15 b4 ♘a4 16 ♘xa4 bxa4 17 ♗xf6 gxf6** Black would have no compensation for the weakened pawn position.

5 After **13 ... ♘c5??** White's reply is so simple and crushing that we hope you weren't caught out: **14 ♗xf6 gxf6 15 ♘c6 ♕c8 16 ♘xf6 mate**!

6 After **17 ... ♖c8** Tal intended **18 b4! ♘ce4 19 ♕xa6 ♘xg5 20 ♕a4+! ♔c7 21 ♕a7 mate**.

7 Larsen did not relish **16 ... dxe5** because of **17 ♘f5! ♗c5+ 18 ♔h1 0-0-0 19 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 20 ♕xd6 ♗c6** (if 20 ... ♗b5 21 ♕c5+) **21 ♕e7!** with unpleasant threats.

8 After **20 ... ♗c6** White has **21 ♘g3! ♕g4 22 ♘xe5 ♕g5 23 ♕e2!** when **23 ... 0-0** fails to **24 ♘xf7!** etc.

9 White has no forced mate after **21 ... ♔d7** but wins so much material that mate would not be long in coming, e.g. **22 ♗f5+ ♔c6 23 ♗e4+ ♘d5 24 ♗xd5+** (or even 24 ♖xd5!) **24 ... ♔d7 25 ♗xa8+ ♔e6 26 f8=♕ ♖xf8 27 ♖xf8** etc. Wouldn't you resign rather than face this!

10 Accepting the sacrifice is no improvement. The finish could have been **15 ... fxe6 16 ♕h5+ ♔f8** (or 16 ... ♔d7 17 ♕g4!) **17 dxe6 ♗f6 18 e7+!** (line clearance) **18 ... ♕xe7 19 ♖d8+** (diversionary sacrifice) **19 ... ♕xd8 20 ♕f7 mate.** Also 18 ♖d7! would win here.

11 The second acceptance would be just as catastrophic: **17 ... fxe6 18 ♖hf1+ ♔g8 19 ♕h5 ♖h7 20 ♕e8+ ♗f8 21 dxe6 ♕e7 22 ♖xf8+!** wins.

12 If **7 ... d4** then **8 ♘d5! ♘xd5 9 cxd5 a6** (the knight cannot move because of ♘c7 double check) **10 ♘a3!** and Black's knight is lost to the pin.

13 After **11 ... ♕b6** White has **12 e5 ♗b7 13 ♕e2! dxe5 14 fxe5 ♘d5 15 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 16 ♖xd5! exd5 17 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 18 exd6+ ♔f8 19 ♕e7+ ♔g8 20 ♕xd7** with a winning position.

14 If **14 ... ♘c5 15 fxe5 ♘d5** (15 ... ♕xe5? 16 ♗f4) **16 ♘xd5 exd5 17 ♖xd5 ♗xd5 18 ♕xd5** with a crushing attack.

15 After **14 ... ♗c5** Black's queen is too vulnerable on a1, allowing White to win by **15 ♘xc5 ♘xc5 16 ♗b5+! axb5** (16 ... ♔f8 17 ♕b4 wins) **17 ♖xa1 ♘e4+ 18 ♔e3 ♘xd2 19 ♖xa8** etc.

16 Tal intended to answer **17 ... ♕xe4** by **18 fxg7!** giving us two main lines: (1) **18 ... ♗c5+ 19 ♔g3 ♕e5+** (19 ... ♖g8 20 ♖e1) **20 ♔h3 ♕xg7 21 ♘c7+ ♔f7 22 ♖f1+ ♔g8 23 ♗h6** etc. (2) **18 ... ♕f5+ 19 ♖f3 ♗c5+ 20 ♔g3 ♕e5+ 21 ♔h3 ♖g8 22 ♖e1** etc.

17 **22 ... ♕c4+? 23 ♔g1 ♗c5+ 24 ♔h1 ♕xb5** would allow **25 ♘d5+ ♔g6 26 ♖f6+** followed by mate in two.

18 **24 ... ♔e7?** leads to **25 ♕c5+ ♔xd7 26 ♖d1+ ♔e8 27 ♘c7 mate**.

19 **22 ... ♖d8** loses to **23 ♗f7+!** but Gligoric and Matanovic give the defence **22 ... b5!** (not an easy move to find in time trouble) **23 ♗d7+ ♕xd7 24 ♖xd7 ♔xd7 25 ♕f7+ ♗e7 26 ♕xg7 ♗e4 27 ♕xh6 ♗d5** with some chances of survival.

20 There were three main variations to consider after **20 c4!** (apart from the move played in the game): (1) If **20 ... ♘xc4 21 ♕b7!** wins. (2) If **20 ... dxc4 21 ♕b5 ♖c8 22 ♖xa5** and the rook enters the attack. (3) If **20 ... f6 21 cxd5 exd5 22 exf6** opening up the game in White's favour.

21 The most dangerous threat is **26 ♕h5+! ♔d7 27 ♕f7+ ♔xd6 28 ♘e4+ ♔e5 29 ♕xf6+ ♔xe4 30 ♖e1+ ♔d3 31 ♕c3 mate**!

22 An obvious improvement that Panov seems to have missed (after 25 ... ♘d7 26 ♕g4) is **26 ... ♘d8!** which makes White's task much more difficult, so better here seems an immediate 26 ♖e1! with many strong threats.

23 Let us examine these three defences in turn: (1) **13 ... ♘cxe4 14 ♘xe4 ♕xc4 15 ♗xf6 gxf6 16 ♘f5!** wins. (2) **13 ... b5 14 ♘dxb5 axb5 15 ♘xb5 ♗xb5 16 ♗xb5+ ♘cd7 17 e5!** wins. (3) **13 ... ♖c8 14 bxc5 ♕xc5 15 e5 ♕xc4 16 exf6 gxf6 17 ♘e4 fxg5 18 ♘f5!** wins yet again. Note how in all cases the advance or the capture of the e-pawn opens up vital lines for the attacker.

24 No. **19 ♘xg7** would leave White chasing shadows after **19 ... ♔xg7 20 ♖c7 ♕e6 21 ♗xf6+ ♕xf6 22 ♖xe7+ ♔g6!** and the attack comes to a dead end.

25 After **20 ... ♖he8 21 ♗xf6! ♗xf6 22 ♖c7+ ♔g8** I hope you saw **23 ♖xg7+!** winning.

26 Indeed, the king hunt by **25 ♖e6+ ♔xg5 26 ♖c5+ ♔f4 27 ♔f2** looks most attractive at first glance, e.g. 27 ... g5? 28 h3! and 29 g3 mate, or 27 ... ♖ad8 28 g3+ ♔g4 29 ♖e4+ ♔h3 30 ♖h4 mate. However Black has the saving move **27 ... ♗c6!** which prevents a check on e4, and plans to answer **28 h3** with **28 ... ♗xg2!** Finally, if **28 g3+ ♔g4 29 ♖exc6 bxc6 30 ♔g2** then **30 ... g5!** extinguishes the last spark.

27 Tal's opponent would have had winning chances by 'sacrificing' the queen with **26 ... ♗xb7! 27 ♕xa3 ♖xe5** etc.

28 Ragozin's move **21 ♖d1!** would have decided the issue because if Black tries **21 ... e4** then **22 d5!** wins.

29 After **26 ... ♔f4** White wins by **27 ♖f1+ ♔e4 28 ♕e6!** etc.

30 It would have been naïve of White to disregard his opponent's possibilities by playing **11 e5** expecting 11 ... dxe5? 12 ♗xf6 winning. Tal rejected 11 e5 because of the active counter-plan **11 ... ♘b4! 12 exf6 ♖xc3 13 ♘d4 ♖a3 14 ♘b3 ♖xb3! 15 cxb3 ♘xa2+ 16 ♔b1 ♘b4 17 ♗d3 d5** with a strong attack.

31 After the sub-variation **18 ... ♖g8 19 fxe6 fxe6 20 ♖xf6 ♖xg2 21 ♖f7 ♖xc3 22 ♖xe7! ♖c6** Tal had worked out the following win: **23 ♖xh7! ♖f2 24 ♖h8+! ♗e8** (otherwise it is mate next move) **25 ♕a7! ♕c7! 26 ♕a8+ ♕c8 27 ♖xd6+! ♔e7** (27 ... ♖xd6 28 ♖xe8+!) **28 ♖xe8+ ♕xe8 29 ♕xc6**

♕xc6 30 ♖xc6 with a won ending. An incredibly difficult line to analyse over the board!

32 After **20 ... ♗xf6** White has **21 ♕xf6+ ♔c7 22 e5! d5 23 ♘xd5+! exd5 24 ♕d6+ ♔c8 25 ♖xd5 ♖b7 26 ♖c5+ ♖c7 27 b4!** and Black is lost.

33 If **22 ... ♖c8** White pulls the following trick out of the bag: **23 ♘d5! bxa3 24 b4 ♕a4 25 ♕b6+ ♔e8 26 ♗h5 mate**.

34 After **21 b5** comes **21 ... ♖xd3! 22 bxc6 ♖cd8 23 ♗d4 ♖xd2+! 24 ♔xd2 e5 25 cxb7** (if 25 c7 ♖d7 26 ♖ac1 ♘c8!) **25 ... exd4** with advantage to Black.

35 Black does indeed have the win that Tal supposed. He plays **25 ... ♔f7 26 ♗d4 ♗f6! 27 ♗xf6 gxf6 28 ♔d6** (the only counter to ♖d8 mate) **28 ... ♖c6+ 29 ♔d5** (29 ♔d7 ♘b6+ 30 ♔d8 ♖c8 mate) **29 ... ♖c7! 30 ♘e4 ♖d7+ 31 ♘d6+ ♔e7** followed by mate.

36 **26 ♗xe7** would lead to mate after **26 ... ♖c3+ 27 ♔a2 ♖c2+ 28 ♔b1** (28 ♔b3 ♖b2 mate) **28 ... ♗d3!** followed by **29 ... ♘c3 mate**. If White had played **25 ♔b1 b6! 26 ♗xe7** then Black could win with **26 ... ♗d3+ 27 ♔a2 ♖c2+ 28 ♔b3 b5! 29 ♖ab1 ♖xd2** etc.

37 After **13 ... dxc3 14 ♘f4 ♔f7 15 ♗d3 ♘c6** White wins by **16 ♗xf5! exf5 17 e6+ ♗xe6 18 ♕h7+ ♖g7 19 ♕xg7+!** winning a whole rook.

38 **20 ... ♖h8** fails to **21 e6! ♕xe6 22 ♖e3 ♖xh5 23 ♖xe6+ ♔f7 24 ♖xg6!** etc.

39 **21 ... ♖h8** loses this time to **22 ♖xe5+ ♔d7 23 ♖e7+ ♕xe7 24 ♕xg6** etc.

40 (1) After **25 ... fxg6 26 ♗g5! ♕b6 27 ♘a4!** (It is vital not to lose time) **27 ... ♕a5 28 ♖f1! ♘e5** (if 28 ... ♕xa4 29 ♕f7+ and 30 ♗h6 wins) **29 ♗e7 ♗xg4 30 ♗xd6** and Black's defence breaks down. (2) If **25 ... hxg6** White attacks powerfully with **26 ♗g5 f6 27 ♕h2 fxg5 28 ♕h8+ ♔f7 29 ♖f1+ ♘f6 30 e5!** followed by **31 ♗xg6+** etc.

41 After **30 ... fxg5** White wins by **31 ♗xg6 hxg6 32 ♕h8+ ♔f7 33 ♖h7+!** (the point).

42 **17 ... b4?** would allow a crushing attack by **18 ♘d5! exd5 19 ♕xd5+ ♔h8 20 ♖xh7+! ♔xh7 21 ♕h5+ ♔g8 22 ♗c4+ ♔f8 23 ♕f7 mate.** In this line it becomes obvious that the weakened diagonal a2-g8 resulting from 15 ... fxg6 and Black's weakened c4 square resulting from 17 ... b4? combine to invite such a disaster.

43 After **24 ... g6** it is clear that White will sacrifice but the details provide a splendid example of how to open up lines against the king: **25 ♖hxg6+ hxg6 26 ♖xg6+ ♔f7** (if 26 ... ♗g7 27 ♖xf6) **27 ♕g5 ♘h7 28 ♕h5 ♘f6 29 ♖xf6+! ♔xf6 30 ♘f5!** (thematic) **30 ... exf5 31 ♘d5+ ♔g7 32 ♗d4+ ♔g8 33 ♘f6+ ♔g7 34 ♕h7 mate.** Excellent!

44 After **27 ... ♕b6** there is a problem-like intersection move **28 ♗d7!** after which Black has no way of guarding both g7 and e6 at the same time. Examine this instructive move carefully.

45 Of course, the threat is **32 ♕xg8+! ♔xg8 33 ♖h8 mate**. Easy but it must have been visualised moves ago by Tal.

46 After **22 f6 ♗xf6 23 ♕xa8 ♗b7 24 ♕a7 ♖a8 25 ♘c5!?** it is all highly ingenious but **25 ... ♘xc5!** (25 ... dxc5 26 ♖d7) **26 ♗xc5 dxc5 27 ♖d7 ♕xd7 28 ♕xa8+ ♗xa8 29 ♗xd7 ♗xe4** gives Black enough for the exchange. It is often those very variations that Tal avoids which stamp him as a great player.

47 If **24 ... ♖b5** Tal had planned **25 ♕c6! ♕xa5 26 f6!** winning.

48 White's bishop is indeed lost but after **23 h4! ♔xh7 24 h5** the black king's position is dangerously opened up.

49 **27 a3** fails to **27 ... ♗xd5! 28 ♗xd5 ♕c2+! 29 ♔a1** (or 29 ♕xc2 bxc2+ followed by cxd1=♕) **29 ... ♕xc1+ 30 ♖xc1 ♖xc1 mate**, an oft-recurring theme.

50 Shamkovich's main idea after **19 ♕h3** was to answer **19 ... ♗b6** with **20 ♗xg6! fxg6 21 ♖e7 ♖f7 22 ♕e6 ♘e5 23 ♕xf7+ ♘xf7 24 ♖e8 mate,** or if here **20 ... ♘f6 21 ♕h6! fxg6 22 gxf6** wins.

51 After **27 ... ♖e8 28 ♕e5! ♖xe7 29 dxe7 ♕e8 30 ♕e6+ ♔h8 31 h5 ♗f3 32 h6**, or here **31 ... ♗c6 32 g6** with the deadly threat of **33 ♕f7** (analysis by Tal).

52 White can answer **12 ... ♕c7** with **13 ♗xf7+! ♖xf7 14 ♘xf7 ♔xf7 15 ♘g5+ ♔g8** (see game 26!) **16 ♖he1 ♘f8 17 ♗f4 ♕b7 18 ♗d6!** with strong central pressure.

53 After **13 ... ♗c5 14 ♕h4 bxc4** White has **15 ♗c3! ♕xa2 16 ♖xd7 ♗xd7 17 ♘h6+ ♔h8 18 ♕xf6 gxf6 19 ♗xf6 mate**, a recurring theme in this game.

54 After **14 ... ♘d5** White has **15 ♘g5! h6 16 ♘xh6+ gxh6 17 ♕xh6**

♗xg5 18 ♕xg5+ ♔h8 19 ♗c3+! ♘xc3 20 ♖d4! mating (analysis by Panov).

55 White wins in a similar fashion to the variation we saw earlier. After **15 ... ♘e8 16 ♕xd8 ♕xa2 17 ♗c3! ♘ef6** he planned **18 ♖xd7! ♗xd7 19 ♘h6+ ♔h8 20 ♕xf6 gxf6 21 ♗xf6 mate.**

56 After **18 ... f6** White wins by **19 ♖he1! gxh6 20 ♕xh6 ♖g8 21 ♘g5!** with a forced mate.

57 I hope you weren't asleep! Of course, White has the notorious 'smothered mate' after **19 ... ♖e8 20 ♕g8+!** followed by **21 ♘f7 mate.**

58 After **22 ... ♕b8 23 ♗xf6 ♘xf6?** White has the thematic **24 ♗xf7+! ♔xf7 25 ♕b3+ ♔g6** (the king must take a stroll since 25 ... ♔f8 fails to 26 ♘g5) **26 ♘h4+ ♔h5 27 ♕f3+! ♔xh4 28 ♕f5!** (a quiet move which is peculiar in that it breaks a forced sequence, but such moves are an essential part of attacking play) **28 ... g5 29 ♕xh7+! ♘xh7 30 ♖h6 mate**. (see the final position of the game!)

59 After **20 ... ♗e5 21 ♖c4!** Black cannot defend his e-pawn and more importantly he can hardly free his pieces, his problem throughout the game.

60 After **19 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 20 ♘xf7** Tal did not like the counter **20 ... ♖f8!** aiming at White's f2 and forcing **21 ♗xg6 hxg6 22 ♕h8+ ♔xf7 23 ♕xg7+ ♔e8 24 ♕xg6+ ♖f7** when the attack is broken up.

61 After **23 ... ♖d6 24 ♖e1 ♔f8** Black has indeed freed himself from the pin, but after **25 ♖e3!** his problems would not be over. For example **25 ... ♘f4** would allow White to transpose to a favourable ending by **26 ♕xe5 ♕xe5 27 ♗xe5 ♖d1+ 28 ♔h2 ♗d6 29 ♗xd6 ♖xd6 30 ♖f3 ♖f6 31 ♖c3** (Tal).

62 Expressed in concrete terms, with the numbers in brackets corresponding to those of our general considerations, we have (1) **16 c4 ♘b4** (2) **17 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7** (3) **18 ♖xd7 ♕xd7** (4) **19 ♘e5 ♕d4 20 ♘f6+ gxf6 21 ♕h5+ ♔g7** (5) **22 ♕h6+ ♔g8 23 ♗xf6** with a forced mate.

63 Tal realised that after **29 ... ♗d6 30 ♖xf8+ ♕xf8! 31 ♖e1 ♕xf2!** Black's position is defensible.

64 **24 ... ♕b7** would not help in view of the typical change-over of pinner by **25 ♖xc6! ♖xc6 26 fxe5 ♗xe5! 27 ♕h5**; or here **26 ... ♗e7 27 ♕f3** and **28 ♖c1** wins.

65 **29 ... ♗xe5?** loses to another fatal pin **30 ♖d1!**

66 The threat is the typical sacrifice **20 ♖xh7 ♔xh7 21 ♕h5+ ♔g8 22 ♗xg6 fxg6 23 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 24 ♗d2** followed by **25 ♖h1+**.

67 (1) **20 ... ♗e7 21 ♖xh7! ♗xg5 22 ♖ah1 ♔f8 23 ♗xg6** is the most accurate sequence, although 23 ♖h8+ ♔e7 24 ♕xg5+ also wins for White. (2) **20 ... ♘e7** is best answered by Tal's suggested **21 ♗xg6! hxg6 22 ♗f6 ♗g7 23 ♕h4** threatening **24 ♕h8+!** followed by mate.

68 After **15 ... gxh6** White has a comfortable win with **16 ♕xh6 ♗xf3 17 ♕g5+ ♔h8 18 ♖h4+ ♘h7 19 ♕xe7 ♖g8 20 ♕f6+** etc. If here **18 ... ♗h5** the bishop is brought powerfully into the attack by **19 ♗d3** threatening **20 ♖xh5+**, and if instead of 16 ... ♗xf3 Black chooses **16 ... ♘e4** then **17 ♗d3** again follows.

69 After **17 ♕xh6** Black's best defence is **17 ... ♖fd8!** when White would have nothing better than to force perpetual check after **18 ♗xe6 ♖xd4 19 ♗f5 ♘f6 20 ♕g5+** etc. (Tal).

70 The flaw that Tal saw to his horror was that instead of 28 ... ♕e3+ Black had **28 ... ♖e1+** winning!

71 No! Tal gives the following line: if **24 ... fxe3 25 ♖xf7 ♕g1+** (25 ... ♔xf7 26 ♗h5+) **26 ♖f1 ♗xf1 27 ♕c8+**, or here **26 ... ♘f3+ 27 ♔d1 ♗xf1 28 ♕c8+ ♗f8 29 ♕e6+ ♔h8 30 ♕f6+**.

72 Yet again, no! In fact it was a nasty trap: **25 ♘xf4? ♕xe3 26 ♘xh3 ♘g2+! 27 ♔d1 ♖xf1+ 28 ♗xf1 ♕e1 mate**!

73 After **26 ... ♗xf1 27 ♔xf1?** Black has **27 ... fxe2+ 28 ♔g1 ♖f1+! 29 ♖xf1 ♕h1+!** winning.

74 Tal could have decided the game immediately by **21 ♘f6+** with the following tricky variations: (1) **21 ... ♘xf6 22 exf6 ♖xd4** (if 22 ... ♕xd4 23 fxe7!) **23 ♖xg7+ ♔h8 24 fxe7** wins. (2) **21 ... ♗xf6 22 exf6 g6 23 ♖g4! e5** (if 23 ... ♔h8 there follows the famous mating combination 24 ♕h6 ♖g8 25 ♕xh7+ ♔xh7 26 ♖h4 mate) **24 ♕h6 ♘xf6 25 ♖xf6 exd4 26 ♖h4 ♖fe8 27 ♖xg6+! fxg6 28 ♕xh7+ ♔f8 29 ♖f4+** mating.

75 After **24 ... e5** Tal planned **25 ♕h6 ♘xf6 26 ♖xf6 exd4 27 ♖h4 ♖fe8 28 ♕xh7+** (28 ♖xg6+ is not so convincing here because Black can later interpose ... ♕f5!) **28 ... ♔f8 29 ♖hf4! ♖d7 30 ♖xg6!** and Black's king is trapped (**30 ... ♔e7 31 ♕h4+**).

76 After **27 ♕b8+ ♔h7 28 ♕xb7 ♗xf2+** wins.

77 Again **28 ... ♗xf2+!** is the answer when **29 ♕xf2** fails to **29 ... ♕xc1+!** and **29 ♔xf2** loses to **29 ... ♖xc2+ 30 ♖xc2 ♕f5+** with a double attack.

78 (1) Again, after **37 ♗h6 ♗g4+ 38 ♔f4** there comes a quiet move, but this time with the bishop, **38 ... ♗h5!** (2) The old defensive trick of running the king out of danger would not work in this case, since Black wins after **37 ♔e2 ♗g4+ 38 ♔d2 ♕f2+ 39 ♔c1 ♕e1+** etc.

79 White would get a dangerous initiative by playing (after 16 ... ♕xc3?) **17 ♘c4 ♕xd3** (if 17 ... b5 18 ♘d6+ ♔e7 19 ♘xb5!) **18 ♖fd1 b5 19 ♖xd3 bxa4 20 ♘d6+ ♔e7 21 ♘f5+ ♔e8 22 ♘xg7+ ♔e7 23 ♘f5+** etc.

80 No! After **21 ... ♕xc4? 22 ♖ae1+ ♕e6 23 ♖xe6+ fxe6 24 ♗xg6+ ♔d7 25 ♖d1+** followed by **26 ♗f6.** White's pawn on g7 would be crippling.

81 The immediate **19 ... ♗d4** could have been met by a counter-thrust against Black's g7 as follows: **20 ♕xd4 ♖e1+ 21 ♗f1 ♗d3 22 ♗h6!** a line showing that White's active rook must not be forgotten.

82 **21 ♕xa5** loses to **21 ... ♖xf2! 22 ♔xf2 ♗d4+!**

83 After **26 ... ♔h8** White has **27 ♕d4! ♖xf2+ 28 ♔g1!**

84 **17 ♘xe6?** would hand the initiative over to Black after **17 ... ♘xe6 18 ♕xe6 ♗h4 19 ♕g4 ♗xg3+ 20 ♕xg3 ♘f6!**

85 **18 ... ♘f6** would now lose to **19 ♕g6 ♘cd7 20 ♘xe6! ♕c4 21 ♘f5 ♕xe6 22 ♘xh6+ ♔f8 23 f5! ♘e5 24 fxe6 ♘xg6 25 hxg6.**

86 **28 ... ♕xe4** would lose the exchange after **29 ♕xf7+! ♔xf7 30 ♘d6+ ♔e6 31 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 32 ♖b1** with great advantage to White in the ending.

87 After **29 ♕e8+ ♖f8 30 ♘e7+ ♔h7 31 ♕xf8** Black can play the devastating check **31 ... ♗d4+.**

88 Tal nearly missed the horrible **19 ... ♕xe5!** at the end of the 'combination'. Did you miss it too?

89 In the sub-variation 37 ... ♔xa6 is forced because after **37 ... ♔c7 38 ♕c8+ ♔b6 39 ♕b7+ ♔c5 40 ♕b4+ ♔c6 41 ♕b5+ ♔c7 42 ♕b7+** he is either mated or loses his queen.

90 Instead of 39 ... ♗xa3 in the given variation, Black can save the game by **39 ... ♕e2** when **40 ♕c7+ ♔b5 41 ♕b7+ ♔a5 42 ♕c7+** draws.

91 **31 ... ♖d5!** is the best move, when White would have to settle for an equal ending after **32 ♗c4 ♖xd4 33 ♖xd4 ♕xd4 34 ♕xd4 ♖xd4 35 ♗xe6+** etc.

92 After **41 ... ♘g4** White can play **42 ♗xh7+ ♔f8 43 ♖xf7+ ♖xf7** (43 ... ♔xf7 44 ♖h4) **44 ♖g6! ♖xf2 45 ♖g8+ ♔e7 46 ♕d3!** when Black does not even have the pleasure of 46 ... ♘e5 because White's queen is protected by the bishop!

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